What Lies Below

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/33090421.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Underage
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Chiyoh/Beverly Katz, Some Beverly Katz/Abigail Hobbs
Characters:	Will's Mom (original character), Beverly Katz, Matthew Brown (Hannibal), Will's Dad (original character), Molly Foster, Abigail Hobbs, Chiyoh (Hannibal)
Additional Tags:	Creature Fic, inspired by the movie of the same name, Consensual Underage Sex, Mystery, Swimming, Mpreg, Secret Relationship, Monster Hannibal Lecter, Underage Masturbation, Bottom Will Graham, Monsterfucking, Oviposition, Some Heterosexual Sex Scenes, Slow Burn, Alpha Beta Omega Elements, Older Man/Younger Man, Oblivious Will Graham, Manipulation, Biting, Gaslighting, Major Angst in Later Chapters, POV Will Graham, Trauma, Violence, Original Character Death(s), Attempted Murder, Kidnapping, Egg Smashing, Eggpreg, Dead Dove: Do Not Eat
Language:	English
Collections:	Reel Hannibal 2021, favorites to read at 3am, Hannibal 💜, hannigram to save the day, THE 🎵 UBIQ 🦋 ☠ THE 🎭 UNIQUE 🌹
Stats:	Published: 2021-08-07 Completed: 2022-12-16 Words: 249,750 Chapters: 102/102

What Lies Below

by slashyrogue

Summary

Sixteen year old Will's mom sues his Dad for visitation after not seeing him since he was in diapers and he's forced to spend two months of that summer with her. He goes there and meets her boyfriend, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, who is much more than he seems and begins to feel a strange connection to him that he doesn't understand. As his mother's resentment of the attention Hannibal gives him festers day by day even as she seems to get sicker and sicker. But Will can't help but be drawn to Hannibal who seems just as drawn to him in return.

Notes

The story is now finished.

Chapter 1

Will hasn't seen his mother since he was in diapers when out of the blue she sues his father for visitation. His dad is obviously upset but agrees as Will is sixteen now and sooner rather than later he won't have to deal with her at all.

She's given every other Summer and a load of holidays that piss Will off like Christmas but there's nothing they can do.

That very Summer Will goes down to a cabin by the lake in Texas for the summer where he's been told excitedly by a woman he really doesn't remember that, "They're gonna have so much fun!"

He drives there, seething the whole way, and just before the last few miles stops in a gas station for a Coke. It's there that Will first meets Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

The man pulls up in a Bentley that's so out of place that everyone notices. Will himself stares out the window of the station while filling up his drink just as he pulls off sunglasses to come inside.

Will's had crushes on more guys than girls since the fourth grade but the immediate one he gets on this stranger is so bad he finds it hard to even speak when he's spoken to.

"Good afternoon."

He swallows past his nerves and nods. "Yeah."

"Thirsty?"

Will feels the soda running over his hand and curses, dropping the cup which splatters a bit on this man's fancy shoes. "Oh shit! I'm sorry!"

"It's quite alright," the man purrs, his accent more obvious now, "They're only shoes."

He helps Will clean up without being asked and the closeness makes Will's already hard cock even harder. The smell of expensive cologne he knows will feature in tonight's jerk off session by the time they're done.

"There now, young..."

"Will," he says without thinking, "It's Will."

The stranger smiles. "Will, I'm happy to have met you today. My name is Hannibal."

Of course it is.

"Me too, I...thanks. I promise I'm not always so clumsy or...weird."

Hannibal winks. “No need to worry yourself, Will. It’s fine to be weird. Have a good rest of your day.”

Will watches Hannibal pay for his gas, taking in the cut of his tan pants and light blue dress shirt. He looks both like he doesn’t belong in his clothes and like they’re made for him. Hannibal meets Will’s eyes once more before he leaves and even as Will pays for his coke he stares to watch the Bentley pull away.

He thinks about nothing but Hannibal the whole ride to the cabin and even as he pulls up so it takes him a second to notice the other cars around him.

The Bentley makes him freeze.

“Will! Sweetheart!”

Will turns to see the woman he knows only from pictures now much older come out with her hands wide. She’s got wrinkles at the corners of her eyes and her teeth tell him she’s obviously a smoker. He’s barely taken a step when she rushes up for a hug.

“My baby,” she coos, making his skin crawl.

“Mom.”

“I’m so happy to see you.”

He sighs. “Yeah, it’s—“

His mom pulls away fast and looks out at the lake behind them

“Darling! Come and meet my son!”

Will turns just in time to see Hannibal emerge, the water dripping down his furry chest, and the blue speedos are so tight Will bites back a whimper.

Fuck.

His mom runs up to kiss him and Will looks away.

“Will, this is Hannibal...my boyfriend. Hannibal, this is Will.”

Will looks at Hannibal who seems not even a little surprised to see him. He holds out his hand and Will takes it.

“Hello Will, I’m happy to finally meet you. Your mother talks about you all the time.”

Will frowns. “She does?”

“Oh yes. Is that not right, Leanne?”

His mother frowns. “Yes, of course sweetheart. The biggest mistake I ever made was leaving you behind, I—“

Will blinks back tears. “I think I need to go lie down. I’m a little tired.”

Both adults share a look and his mom smiles. “You go right ahead, honey. Hannibal can grab your bags and show you to your room.”

Will pushes his glasses up his nose. “Thanks.”

He watches Hannibal walk to his car, open the trunk, and pick up four suitcases with ease. Will’s mind is suddenly filled with the many ways Hannibal could use his obvious strength on him.

“Come, Will. I’ll show you the way.”

Will blushes. “Ok.”

The cabin is nicer inside than it is out, and as they walk by the living room Will can’t help but admire the decor. “I decorated myself,” Hannibal says, “Leanne’s taste is...not exactly my own.”

Will almost laughs at the disgust in his voice. “Not into country kitsch?”

“Not really.”

They share a smile.

He follows Hannibal through the living room and down the hall to a bedroom way bigger than the one he has at home. It’s just as nicely decorated, blue plaid comforter with blue walls and what looks like a few dog statues.

“I hope you don’t mind that I...took a look at your social media. I saw you like dogs, and you prefer the color blue.”

Will blushes harder. “You stalked me on twitter?”

“A bit,” Hannibal teases, setting down his suitcases, “I wanted you to be comfortable during your stay. Leanne spoke very highly of---”

“Up until a few months ago I hadn’t even seen my mother since I was six,” he says, sitting on the bed, “She doesn’t know me and I don’t know her. So whatever she’s told you---”

Hannibal sits down beside Will on the bed, and the closeness only makes it that much easier to notice he’s still wearing that speedo. He smells like water, cool and fresh, along with that same expensive cologne.

“Leanne lamented to me how much she regretted leaving you with your father many times, Will. Which is why I encouraged her to reach out and connect with you again.”

Will stands up fast. “YOU? You’re the one who got me in this mess?”

“Will…”

“I can’t...just leave me alone, ok? I don’t want to be here, and I...I need to be alone. I know I sound like an asshole cuz you’re being so nice but...I don’t want to be here, Hannibal. Not even a little. The fact that you made this happen---”

Hannibal stands, his frown deep as he reaches out to touch Will’s arm. He’s warm, warmer than most, and Will’s raging crush seems to go right to his cock.

“I was under the impression that children want to have relationships with their parents. If I did something wrong, I apologize. I never wanted to do anything to hurt you or your mother.”

Will sighs. “I know. Just...please go.”

Hannibal leaves without another word and Will locks the door behind him before kicking off his shoes and lying on the bed. He closes his eyes as a tear falls down his face. He pushes thoughts of his mother out of his mind and focuses on the good things.

Like Hannibal in that speedo.

Will’s cock twitches and he unbuckles his pants, shoving his hand into his underwear. He starts to jerk off, biting his lip as he thinks about the water rolling off Hannibal’s hairy chest, and the smell of cologne makes him moan as he moves faster.

“Fuck,” he hisses.

He imagines Hannibal walking up to him instead of his mom after leaving the lake, lifting and laying him on the hood of his car. He covers his mouth as he moans louder, so desperate now to come, and the fantasy continues as Hannibal rips off his jeans to suck on his cock.

Will can almost smell him in the air, hand moving so fast his wrist hurts, and when he comes there’s almost too much in his hand but he keeps on stroking till he can’t move.

Will pulls his hand out and lets it fall to his side, still panting, and opens his eyes in time to see the door is slightly open.

He freezes.

He was sure he locked it.

Will takes a deep breath and for a minute smells Hannibal’s cologne still lingering in the air. It was obviously strong and expensive stuff. He forces himself out of bed to lock the door properly this time before kicking off everything below his waist and laying down again.

He’s still sticky but closes his eyes to remember the fantasy for just one more minute.

Fuck.

He just jerked off thinking about his mother’s boyfriend.

It was obviously more than a little crush.

This was gonna be the worst summer ever.

Chapter 2

Will doesn't come out of his bedroom for a few hours and occupies himself with making his temporary bedroom feel a bit more like him. He puts out his laptop, plugs in his cell, and puts away the clothes he brought along while hanging a few things. A knock comes when it's just turning dark outside and gives him pause.

"Yeah?"

"May I come in?"

It's Hannibal. Will blushes immediately, wondering if it still smells like he jerked off, but answers anyway. "Yeah sure."

Hannibal peeks his head in and Will catches a glimpse of a suit coat. He's a little thrown off but smiles anyway. "Dinner is served. I'm sure you're quite hungry as you skipped lunch."

Will closes the closet door and frowns. "Sorry, I was---"

"No need to apologize, you were occupied. Your room looks nice."

"Thanks."

"I've made something special," Hannibal says, "Don't be long or it will get cold."

Hannibal leaves just as fast as he'd come and Will thinks for a minute if he should wear something nice. He's got a few button up shirts and some dark jeans. There's no way he could compete with a suit but it would be more than just his t-shirt and shorts.

He changes into a blue button down and dark blue jeans, running deodorant under his arms and spraying the cologne his dad got him last Christmas. Will stares at himself in the mirror, blushing still, and decides to take off his glasses. He lets out a long breath, nods once, and heads out the door following the obvious scent of meat.

This place is a little bigger than he'd thought at first glance. There's a living room, kitchen, and apparently a dining room. He finds his mother and Hannibal there already eating. Hannibal is definitely wearing a suit, which is very strange given how hot it still kinda is, but he looks more like himself in it.

And also he somehow has gotten even better looking in the last few hours.

Hannibal smiles at him. "Hello, Will."

"Sweetheart," his mother says, "Come sit by me."

Will ignores her and goes to sit on Hannibal's left side. Hannibal's smile widens as Will sits down, watching as Will picks up a napkin to fold into his lap, and leans over to lift the top off a covered plate revealing the 'something special.'

It’s fish.

Will loves fish, really fishing in general, and to see the familiar meal get placed on his plate brings tears to his eyes. “Th...ank you.”

“I saw you enjoyed fish as well,” he whispers, grabbing another bowl and putting down some potatoes next to the fish, “And potatoes.”

“Isn’t he the *best*?” his mother says, grabbing Hannibal’s other arm, “He was so worried about how you’d like it here, Sweetheart. Honestly it was just the cutest thing.”

Will blushes as he cuts into his fish. “Thanks.”

“I don’t really like fish all that much,” she kept on, her voice making Will’s skin crawl, “You know cuz your father---”

“Leanne,” Hannibal said, cutting her off, “Did you tell Will about the other surprise?”

Will looks up. “What surprise?”

She claps her hands together, eyes wide as she makes a weird noise. “Oh! Willie...you won’t believe it.”

He looks at Hannibal, who hasn’t taken eyes off him since he came into the dining room.

“What?”

“Hannibal bought a boat!”

Will’s heart beats a little faster. “A boat?”

“YES! It’s coming tomorrow! It’s for fishing, and maybe even a few...late night boat rides alone.”

She wiggles her eyebrows, grabbing Hannibal’s arm and forcing him to look her away. He smirks and pats her hand. “Perhaps.”

His mother giggles like a schoolgirl, her face turning red, and pulls Hannibal into another kiss that he can’t bring himself to watch.

A boat.

Will imagines going fishing with Hannibal, the two of them alone on the boat, and feels a familiar stir in between his legs again. He blushes, smiles, and takes a bite of a potato.

“That’s cool,” he says casually.

“I thought perhaps we could go fishing,” Hannibal says, “I’ve never been but...there are plenty of fish to be had in the lake. It’s quite vast once you get out far enough.”

“Yeah,” he smiles, “I didn’t bring my pole or anything but…”

“I have poles for you to use,” Hannibal interrupts, watching him intently, “Plenty of poles.”

They stare at each other for a bit too long before his mother makes another noise.

“Oh! I have another surprise!”

Will looks at her. “Another one?”

“There are plenty of teens for you to hang around this summer, including the neighbors just a few miles away. They have a daughter just about to graduate that I said you’d LOVE to meet!”

“Leanne,” Hannibal says, his voice hard, “I thought this summer was for Will to bond with you again after being apart so long. Not for...cavorting with rowdy teenagers.”

She scoffed and picked up a potato with her fingers popping it into her mouth. “You’re such a wet blanket sometimes, Hanni. Will’s sixteen, not sixty. A few hours with a few kids won’t kill him.”

“He’s in a brand new environment and---”

“*I’m* his mother. You’re not his father. Having Will hang around a few kids his own age…”

“It’s fine,” Will says, wanting to stop the tension though the idea of being pushed into hanging around a group of strangers fills him with dread, “I...can hang out.”

“Will…”

He forces himself to smile. “It’s fine.”

Hannibal smiles back. “Alright.”

There’s some awkward silence that follows as they eat a little more, not even bothering to make eye contact though Will sneaks a few glances at Hannibal in his suit. He doesn’t see even a single bead of sweat on his forehead, which is weird since they don’t have air on and Will himself feels a little warm. Hannibal really was made to wear suits apparently.

“So,” his mother says, breaking the silence, “Do you want us to tell you how we met?”

Will really doesn’t want to know, but also is curious how someone so sophisticated could’ve gotten attached to Leanne Graham. “Sure.”

Leanne grabs Hannibal’s hand again and stares at him that same annoyingly adoring way she has since Will arrived. “I was here with a few of my friends last summer, you know as part of a little fun wine weekend, and who do I spot at the bar but this fella. He’s dressed to the damn nines, you know, even fancier than he is now, and I just know he’s way out of my fucking league.”

Hannibal pats her hand and smiles. “But...the scent of her wafted into my olfactory senses and I was struck. I turned and we locked eyes across the room. She did not move or speak

until I stood in front of a table of no less than six women. I said…"

"May I buy you a glass of wine?" his mother says, her voice so soft Will felt his chest tighten.

The way she was looking at Hannibal made him want to gag.

"And that was it?" he says.

Hannibal smiles at him. "We spoke all night long, and began to see each other many nights a week until we moved in together. Then I bought this cabin, and...talked Leanne into pursuing a renewed connection with you."

Will glares at him. "Not really all that exciting a story."

"Oh c'mon sweetheart," Leanne said, "It's romantic. He said he could smell me across the room and was struck. No one else would do."

He dug his nails into his knee as his lip curls. So somehow his mom, a loud mouthed rude woman way beneath someone like Hannibal, found love because she smelled so much? He knows if he starts to laugh they'll get upset so instead he smiles. "I guess when you put it that way...it's like fate."

"Yes," Hannibal says, staring at Will with that same intensity, "It was."

Will looks away, blushing, and doesn't know why but he feels warm all over. The story wasn't even about him, but still he feels like it was. He shakes his head, going back to his meal, and looks away the few times they touch again.

This whole thing just feels wrong.

Hannibal has to see that he's way out of her league, right? Like he's so far out of her league that she's in another subpar ballpark? He glares at his fish, stomach in knots, and barely finishes before he stands. "I...can I be excused?"

He watches Hannibal's face fall. "Is everything alright?"

"I'm just full," he lies, "I...thanks for dinner. I'm excited about the boat and everything."

His mother makes a soft noise. "Aww, baby...come give me a goodnight hug."

Will tenses up.

"Leanne...give the boy some space. He's just arrived and is not yet comfortable I'm sure."

She pouts her lip out. "But...just a little hug? I'm not gonna maul him."

"Leanne, just—-"

Will forces himself to smile. "It's fine."

“Will, if you’re not comfortable it’s perfectly acceptable to refuse.”

He shakes his head and walks around to his mother.

“Gotta get in all those missed hugs, right?”

She grins and pulls him into her arms hard, nearly smashing his chin into her neck. Will closes his eyes and tries to calm the tension in him even as she continues to practically shove him in closer. He can smell her perfume, a tart stingy scent, and imagines another.

A more expensive one.

“My baby.”

Will pulls back at her voice, not smiling now.

“Goodnight.”

She pats his cheek.

“Goodnight sweetheart.”

He looks at Hannibal. “Goodnight.”

Hannibal looks a little angry but his expression softens when he smiles. “Goodnight, Will.”

He practically runs from the dining room to his bedroom, locking the door and falling back onto his bed.

If that short meal is anything to go by, this was gonna be a long hell of a summer.

Will peels off his shirt and jeans to get rid of the scent of his mother’s perfume, though he can still smell it. He sighs, hopping into bed wearing only boxers as he pulls out his laptop. He’s just about to pull up something to stream when he realizes he doesn’t know the wifi password.

“Shit.”

Maybe it was written somewhere and he wouldn’t have to ask?

He sighs.

Probably not.

Will pulls on a pair of pajama pants and his t-shirt from earlier before he walks back down toward the dining room. He’s just about to turn the corner when he hears a moan coming from the dining room.

A female one.

He knows he shouldn’t look.

If seeing them kiss, hold hands, and make eyes at each other made him feel sick anything worse would do the job. But he can't help but push the door open just a little. He freezes at the sight of his mother in Hannibal's lap, riding up and down with her head thrown back while Hannibal licks at her neck.

Her moans are high pitched and grating, but the obvious desire makes Will's body heat up fast. He finds it hard to look away, and before he can close the door Hannibal notices him. He gasps, let's the door close, and runs all the way back to his room. His face is bright red as he locks the door, panting and leaning against the frame.

Hannibal saw him.

Would he tell Will's mom?

Probably not.

But still.

Hannibal saw.

Will covers his face with his hands and groans. He shouldn't have looked. Now all he'll think about when he tries to have another Hannibal fantasy is his Mom riding Hannibal's cock at the dining room table.

He tosses off his shirt and pants climbing under the comforter before grabbing his cell phone.

It was only eight.

"Worst summer ever."

Chapter 3

Will comes down to breakfast the next morning and feels weird about going into the dining room. He can smell the food, his stomach rumbling, but can't bring himself to head toward the source.

He scoffs, nearly running out the door, and just keeps running.

The image of Hannibal and his Mom last night lingers in his mind as he runs, lip curling, and gets halfway down a random path before he has to take a breath. He bends over, panting, and is just about to stand again when he nearly falls over in surprise.

There's a girl sitting in the grass staring at him.

"Wh---"

"You ok?" she asks.

The girl's black hair is pulled back in a ponytail and her dark eyed gaze looks concerned.

"Yeah, I'm...fine."

"Just thought you'd make yourself pass out this morning?" she jokes.

He smiles, shaking his head. "No, I…why are you sitting in the grass like that?"

She points down. "There's a den of bunnies with babies," she says, frowning, "It's not a real bad spot but...I dunno...I worry."

"Won't you getting close make them leave?"

"That's the point."

Will just watches. "Oh."

"You're new around here," she says, standing now and coming to him, "I'd remember someone so pretty."

He blushes. "Um…"

She laughs and holds out her hand. "Don't worry, I don't like boys but the pretty ones are nice to look at. Beverly Katz."

Will shakes her hand. "Will Graham, I'm...kinda new. It's a long story."

"I got time," she shrugs, "Unless you have somewhere to be."

He looks back down the path at the cabin. "I...no," he says, "Not really."

“Come on then, tell me your story Graham.”

“I….”

“WILL!”

Will turns to find Hannibal, red faced and wide eyed, running down the path to him. He looks between Will and Beverly, his scowl deep, then frowns. “Where have you been? We’ve been looking all over.”

“I…”

“Your room was empty when your Mother went to get you for breakfast. She thought the worst.”

“My car is still there,” Will mumbles, blushing as he pushes his glasses up, “I was just...taking a run.”

Hannibal looks at Beverly. “Hello.”

“Hey,” Beverly says, “Sorry if--”

“Come along, Will,” he says, ignoring her, “Breakfast is already cold.”

Will frowns. “But---”

“Your Mother is waiting.”

He looks at Beverly. “Sorry, I…”

“Next time.”

Will smiles at her. “I’ll know where to find you.”

She nods. “Yep.”

Hannibal grabs his arm tightly and Will gasps as he pretty much drags him back to the cabin where to Will’s surprise there’s a large truck parked that says “BILL’S BOATS.”

“Oh, the boat is---”

“Yes,” Hannibal nearly growls, “Another thing you missed.”

“I wasn’t gone that long.”

“Long enough.”

He pulls his arm away and rubs at the odd heat left behind as Hannibal leads them to the dining room, where to his surprise his Mother is not at the table. Will frowns as he sits down and stares at the many different types of food out.

“I thought you said…”

“Perhaps she went back to bed.”

“You said she was worried.”

“She was.”

“Worried enough to just go back to bed?”

Hannibal hands Will a plate full of sausage. “Eat.”

“You said it was cold.”

“It can be reheated.”

Will fills his plate up with different things: sausage, eggs, and even bacon. Hannibal takes the plate from him, still scowling, and when Will is alone again he can’t help but remember last night. He blushes, annoyed and his arm still hot, which is when Hannibal returns.

“Eat up,” he says softly, his expression less angry now, “You’re a growing boy.”

He takes a few bites, still feeling odd, but the taste is just as good as last night.

“It’s good, thank you.”

“I was unsure as to what you liked for breakfast so I…”

“Just made everything?” Will jokes.

“Yes.”

He smiles. “I usually had cheap cereal or toast for breakfast,” he confesses, taking another bite of bacon, “So this is nice. Sorry I...I just wasn’t really all that…”

Hannibal sighs. “Is this about last night?”

Will freezes.

“We thought you were asleep,” Hannibal says, making Will’s face turn red again, “If we’d known…”

He stares down at his plate.

“I promise you it will not happen again.”

Will grabs the table’s edge and digs his nails into the tablecloth. “It’s fine,” he whispers, nearly hissing, “I’m...fine.”

“I apologize if it made you uncomfortable.”

He looks up and sees Hannibal's frown. "It's fine, ok? I'm fine. Please don't tell my Mom or even ever talk about it again."

"Of course," he whispers, "I will not mention it."

Will relaxes and goes back to eating his breakfast. He watches Hannibal, who oddly enough, hasn't touched a single thing on his plate. "You're not hungry?"

"I ate without you."

He frowns. "I wasn't gone that---"

"GOOD MORNING!" his mother says from behind him, her voice grating on Will's nerves.

"Mornin," Will mumbles, not bothering to look at her.

She walks around him and across to the chair on Hannibal's other side where Will sees she's not even dressed yet still wearing a pink nightgown. "Well don't you two look cozy?" she teases, grabbing some food, "Hanni, you should've woken me."

Will looks at Hannibal and smiles though Hannibal doesn't smile back.

So his Mom hasn't been awake yet. He feels oddly happy at the idea that Hannibal was worried about him leaving, but doesn't say anything.

"You were quite tired," Hannibal says, "I didn't want to disturb you."

She laughs and pats his hand. "He's so good to me," she sighs, "Just so good. I mean look at this haul! Is it all cold?"

"Yes, but you can reheat everything just fine."

Will has to resist the urge to laugh at the scowl on her face. "You won't do it for me?"

"You know where the microwave is, Leanne."

"Hmph."

Will waits until she's gone to talk again. "You said she was awake and looking for me."

"I'm sure if Leanne were awake she would've been," Hannibal mumbles, frowning, "I do think it was quite reckless of you to just run into the woods like that. You don't know the area and could've run into a number of dangers."

"Beverly didn't seem dangerous," Will said, taking a bite of his eggs, "And I didn't even go all that far away."

Hannibal's eyes are strangely dark as he glares at him. "You were far enough to find a strange person lingering in the woods."

Will laughs. "She wasn't---"

“She?” his mother asks as she comes back through the kitchen, “Sweetheart, did you meet a girl?”

“Yeah,” Will blushes, “I...she was in the woods when I took a run.”

“Ohhhh!” she squeals, setting her food on the table and running up to shake Will hard by the shoulder, “I knew you’d find someone to have fun with! Is she pretty? What’s her name?”

“Beverly,” Will mumbles, his stomach suddenly in knots, “She...was nice.”

“I’m sure she was,” she laughs, picking up her plate again and walking around the table, “I knew you’d have fun this Summer, sweetie. Now that you met this girl, you can---”

A sudden knock interrupts her and Hannibal stands fast, making a noise that sounds an awful lot like a growl. “I need to sign for the boat. Excuse me.”

Will watches him go.

“Oh! The boat! Maybe you can take Beverly out on it, sweetie? I’m sure she’d love that.”

“Yeah,” he mumbles, “Maybe.”

He feels a sudden rush of heat to his arm and looks down at it.

There’s a bluish mark there, almost a bruise, and when he runs his hand over it he shivers. Had Hannibal held him that hard? It felt weird at the time but not painful. Will’s stomach twists and he pushes his chair out to stand.

“I’m still a little tired, can I be excused?”

His Mother smiles. “Sweetheart, you don’t have to ask. You can do whatever you like. Go back to sleep. If you sleep too long we’ll wake you.”

Will rushes from the dining room fast, arm still hot, and doesn’t feel normal until he’s alone again behind a locked door. He sits on his bed, trying to catch his breath, and lifts his arm up to look at it.

The mark is gone.

He frowns.

The mark had been there, he knows it was, but how did it just...vanish?

Will is staring at his arm when a light knock makes him look up at his door. “Yeah?”

“May I come in?”

He feels his heart beat faster. “Yeah.”

Hannibal peeks his head in. “Are you alright? Your mother said you weren’t feeling well.”

“I’m...fine.”

“Will…”

“Honestly I just…”

“I’m a doctor,” Hannibal says, coming into the room, “If you’re not feeling well I can help you.”

Will blushes. “I just wanted to get away and it seemed nicer to say.”

Hannibal stops just short of Will’s bed. “Oh, I see.”

“This is still all really weird,” Will mumbles, rubbing his arm and not looking at Hannibal, “I know she wants to be my Mom suddenly but it’s still really weird.”

Hannibal sits down beside him. “If you’d like to be away from your Mother, I have another option?”

He looks at him. “What?”

“The boat is in the water and ready to be taken out. Would you like to go on a fishing trip with me this afternoon?”

Will smiles. “Really?”

Hannibal lays a hand on his arm. “Yes, really. I want you to enjoy your time here, Will, and I’ve been curious as to the fine art of fishing. Would you accompany me this afternoon?”

He feels his hand grow warm but doesn’t pull away. “Yeah, I’d like that.”

“Wonderful,” Hannibal says, his voice almost a purr as he squeezes Will’s arm, “Then I will come collect you when it’s time.”

Will blushes again, hating his traitorous cheeks. “Ok, Hannibal.”

“Wonderful,” Hannibal smiles, letting Will’s arm go as he stands, “Enjoy your...nap.”

He watches him go and doesn’t look away until the door closes. Will’s arm feels warm still and he looks down only to see it’s blue again. He frowns, running his fingers over the same mark, but much lighter now.

Maybe Hannibal is a lot stronger than he realizes.

If that’s the case, why do the marks keep disappearing?

Will shakes his head and falls back onto the bed with a sigh. He smiles wide as he remembers what he’s doing this afternoon.

Maybe this summer wouldn’t be too bad after all.

Chapter 4

The boat is not what Will expects.

“It’s...kinda big.”

Hannibal stands inside what is technically a boat but arguably twice the size of the boat he and Dad have at home. The silver boat has a canopy, fancy seats, and a built-in cooler. Will feels weird even stepping onto the thing but Hannibal’s excitement is contagious.

“Is it….not supposed to be? I didn’t think it was all that large.”

He smiles. “It is, a little. I---”

“Ohh! Are you boys going out today?”

Will doesn’t turn around as he hears his mother’s voice.

“Yes, I think it’s a fine day for fishing,” Hannibal says, “Will has offered to help teach me.”

“Can I tag along? My daddy and I used to fish all the time and---”

He sits down in the chair and forces a smile before he turns around but Hannibal’s voice stops anything he’s planning to say. “No, I believe it’s just us today. There’s really not much room for more than just two people.”

Leanne’s face falls. “There’s plenty of room.”

“No, Leanne. The boy needs some space and you need to give him that. Please go back inside.”

Will feels oddly warm at the authority in Hannibal’s tone and Hannibal’s touch to his arm when he watches his mother go makes him even warmer. He smiles. “Thanks for that.”

“No need,” Hannibal says softly, heading to start the boat, “I promised you some time apart from her and I will keep that promise.”

The motor starting makes Will feel better than he has since he left his father and when they pull away the sight of the cabin getting further from them makes the tension go away completely.

“You sure seem to know enough already!” He calls out to Hannibal, who only smiles.

The further they go into the lake Will can see it connects to other properties but is still big enough that the boats around them aren’t a bother. He leans back in his chair and watches the water seem to sparkle in the sun as they go.

This was a great idea.

Hannibal seems to know exactly where he wants them to stop so Will fiddles with the tackle box and the poles while he pulls them further out. He turns off the engine when they get to a spot in the water hidden away by what looks like a rather dense brush.

“You been here before?”

“I may have gone looking on a smaller boat,” Hannibal says, smiling, “I thought you’d want to be away from possible interference.”

Will blushes a little. “I would’ve been okay if you couldn’t find anywhere quiet.”

“But I wanted you to be comfortable, Will.”

“I know but---”

“But nothing,” Hannibal says firmly, sitting in the other chair, “Now...you can show me how to be a fisherman.”

Will pulls open the tackle box. “I mean I’m no expert but my Dad’s taken me out a lot. It’s not hard.”

“You’re close with your father,” Hannibal says, and it’s not a question.

“Yeah,” he sighs, feeling homesick suddenly, “I am.”

“I’m sorry that my interference made you have to be apart. It was not my intention to hurt you.”

“I know,” Will mumbles, taking out the lure, “Now, I’m gonna show you how to put---”

He gasps when the hook digs into his skin, dropping the lure and staring at the blood the bubbles up. “Here, let me.”

Hannibal takes his hand and sticks Will’s finger in his mouth, sucking on the blood. The warmth that Will’s felt becomes an inferno and he pulls his hand away, bright red faced and cock digging against his jeans. “I’m ok,” he whispers hoarsely, unable to resist sucking on his finger.

He looks at Hannibal then, unable not to want to know his reaction, and freezes.

Hannibal’s eyes look red, like before, and as he watches his skin seems almost...blue. He pulls his finger out of his mouth. “What...your eyes…”

He blinks and his eyes are again brown. “I apologize.”

“What? Why?”

“I have a...condition,” Hannibal sighs, “It manifests itself often in moments of distress. A blood disorder.”

Will frowns. “And it makes your eyes look red and your skin blue?”

“My eyes looked red?”

“I mean, they *did*,” Will mumbles, “They don't look that way now. Maybe it was just the sun.”

“Perhaps. My condition causes skin short term discoloration. I should have told you sooner. Your mother does not know.”

“So you’ve never felt distress with her?”

Just me?

Will’s chest aches at the thought.

Hannibal takes his hand and watches the bluish skin turn normal again. “No, that’s...your mother and I are newly together. I’m not quite comfortable sharing this with her.”

“But you are with me.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, smiling, “And I do not wish to frighten you.”

Will smiles. “You don’t scare me.”

“For now,” Hannibal teases, “Now I think perhaps I can try this on my own.”

He watches Hannibal easily put the lure on and then does his own before starting the rest of the lesson. An hour later they’re both sitting beside each other in the bucket seats Hannibal bought for this very occasion, and Will feels more at home then he has in a long time.

Even at his own home.

“The fish? This isn’t a catch and release place, is it?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “We will, of course, cook them.”

“We just had fish yesterday.”

“Yes, but not fish we hunted and caught together.”

The words make Will warm again and he leans against Hannibal as they wait for a bite. A moment later he feels a pull on his line. “Oh I think I got one.”

“A large one?”

“Maybe?”

He pulls back, and feels a large tug.

Yes this is a big one.

“I think I need…”

Hannibal comes up behind Will and wraps his arms around him to help pull. The feeling makes Will even more warm, almost hot, and his cock aches between his legs.

Shit.

“Pull as hard as you can,” Hannibal purrs into his ear.

Will bites back a moan as he pulls, and to his delight a very large bass comes roaring in. He laughs as it falls, and watches in shock as Hannibal pulls the bass off his hook and cracks it down the middle. The fish lays there, dead, and he smiles at Will.

“Let’s catch another.”

“How did you do that?”

Hannibal smiles and Will is struck by the sight of his teeth. They look...oddly pointy.

“How did I do what?”

“You killed it with your bare hands. Normally I just bang it on the boat or something.”

Hannibal frowns at his hands and then at Will. “My strength is perhaps more than yours?”

“I guess,” Will says, trying not to think about how else he could use that strength.

Will watches Hannibal toss the bass into the cooler full of ice, and when he turns to Will again his teeth look normal.

He really needs to get more sleep apparently.

“I can show you, if you’d like. We could kill the next one together.”

Will licks his lips and nods. “Yeah, I’d...like that.”

He sits down next to Will again and smiles as he picks up his fishing rod. “Excellent.”

The anticipation of another catch is the focus after, in between Hannibal pulling out things for him to eat, and he loses a few catches in his excitement but as the afternoon rolls around Hannibal catches something instead.

Hanniba’s catch is a smaller trout, but still something, and Will’s skin feels that same warmth when he comes from behind to put his hands over Will’s. “Now just take a deep breath,” he whispers, making Will shiver, “And...pull.”

Will hears the crunch as they kill the fish together, panting as he stares at the trout hanging loosely in his hands. “Wow.”

“You did that,” Hannibal says, “How did it feel?”

“Weird.”

“Good weird or bad weird?”

He smiles, blushing as they stare at each other. “I don’t know yet.”

Hannibal smiles and takes the fish from him. “I’ve hunted before,” he says, walking to the cooler, “Once you get used to it, there’s nothing like the power of ending a life with your hands the first time.”

“What did you hunt?”

“Lots of things,” Hannibal says, sitting beside him again.

“Did you Dad…”

Hannibal frowns. “Yes,” he whispers, turning away, “My father took me and my sister once when I was young.”

“Just once?”

“My family died shortly after and then I...hunted alone.”

Will’s stomach tightens. “Oh. I’m sorry.”

“It’s quite alright,” Hannibal says, smiling sadly, “It’s nice to have someone to hunt with again.”

“This wasn’t really hunting,” Will teases, shaking his head.

“Wasn’t it? We lured our prey, caught them by surprise, and then killed them. Very close to hunting really.”

“Hmm, I guess you’re right.”

Hannibal pats Will on the shoulder. “Thank you for hunting with me today, Will.”

“You’re welcome. I...are we leaving?”

Will pulls out his phone and frowns when he sees it’s barely one o’clock.

“No, of course not. I have packed a lunch and even brought along blankets. We could be out here till dusk if we’d like. But I wouldn’t want the fish to spoil.”

“I guess. I mean the cooler can keep them cold for a long time and...we had fish already yesterday. We can always catch fish again.”

Hannibal frowns. “Maybe a night fishing trip can happen another time. We wouldn’t want your mother to worry.”

Will turns away, sighing as watches the water. “Yeah, I guess.”

They have lunch about fifteen minutes later, a fruit salad that tastes hardly at all like fruit with strawberry lemonade, and catch three more fish by the time the sun starts to go down. Will feels sad it's coming to an end.

"I think perhaps it's time to spool in our lines, yes? How does that work again?"

Will smiles as he helps him. "You caught two fish, I'm pretty sure you remember."

"I might ruin the line, I want to be sure."

He laughs. "Uh huh."

Will finishes spooling his own in and takes off the hook just as he hears Hannibal gasp. "Oh."

He turns around and suddenly the world seems to pause.

Hannibal's cut his finger just like Will had hours earlier, and he licks his lips as he stares.

"I suppose we should bring bandages next trip," he says, wincing.

He watches him move his finger up as if to suck the blood away and runs grabbing his hand before he can. "Let me."

Will brings Hannibal's finger to his mouth and the taste of his blood makes the same heat that always seems to come around Hannibal catch fire again. They lock eyes as Will sucks on his finger and watches Hannibal's skin turn that same bluish color again.

He nearly finds himself wanting to take in another finger and pulls back, panting as he stares at Hannibal trying to calm down.

Hannibal's eyes aren't red this time.

No.

Will's whole world is red, like he's seeing things through a pair of tinted glasses. He blinks and everything goes right again.

What the hell?

"Will…" Hannibal starts, reaching for him, but he turns away.

"I think we better get back," he says, confused and still so warm he wants to jump into the lake.

"Yes, I think that's wise."

The ride back is not much fun at all, and Will doesn't even stop to help Hannibal unload. He instead runs right to the house and into the bathroom, still so hot now and tears off all this clothes.

The water is ice cold as he lets it run over him, shaking as he tries not to remember, and when it turns warm he feels normal again.

If he ever was normal at all.

Chapter 5

Dinner was tense.

Will still feels weird about what happened on the boat and not even sure if it's embarrassment or something else. His mom seems a little angry throughout, not even bothering to ask how their trip went and eating everything but the bass Hannibal cooked. Will eats the fish and an odd feeling of satisfaction comes unbidden as he swallows every bite.

He knows that this was one of his, he'd killed it, and that feels like everything.

Hannibal was also quiet. He eats with care as Will watches, and his skin a few times turns a pale shade of blue that Will's mom doesn't seem to notice.

"The fish is good," Will finally says, breaking the silence, "I like the garlic."

"Yes I….thank you," Hannibal frowns, taking another bite.

"I told you I don't even like fish," his mother mumbles, "And now we've had it twice in two days?"

"Will and I spent hours catching these fish, Leanne. It would be nice if you'd appreciate that."

She scoffs. "Thank you for catching fish I won't be eating."

"Le---"

"It's fine," Will says softly, taking another bite, "Some people don't like fish. I don't have to have fish all the time. Thanks for cooking it though. It's great."

The bluish tint to Hannibal's face starts to fade as does his frown. "You're welcome."

They share a smile.

"Maybe we---"

"Now that your trip is over," Leanne interrupts, leaning over and taking Hannibal's arm, "We can have one?"

Hannibal smiles and takes her hand. "Of course," he whispers, kissing it softly, "We can have one this evening if you'd like."

"I'd like."

Will suddenly feels sick to his stomach as he looks away but stabs into the broccoli. He knows leaving the dinner table two nights in a row will look bad, but the closer he sees Hannibal and his Mom get the more he wants to jab a fork in someone's eye. His vision

seems a red haze as Hannibal turns away from his Mom to look at Will, and his eyes go wide with surprise as he lets go of Leanne's hand.

"Will, are you feeling ok?"

He closes his eyes and looks down again. "I'm fine."

"Hannibal's a doctor, Honey. If you're not feeling well…"

Will shakes his head, squeezing his eyes tight, and when he opens them again he can see the last few pieces of broccoli on his plate without the weird red haze.

What was that?

"I'm fine."

He hears the sound of a chair being pushed back and looks up just as Hannibal comes over to him. The touch of his hand to Will's chin as he lifted makes Will shiver. His deep frown is filled with concern.

"Your cheeks are all flushed. Do you have allergies?"

He blinks back tears. "No, I just---"

Hannibal sighs. "Leanne, can you get my medical bag?"

"I'll go get it!"

His mother takes off and Will feels a tear fall down his face. "I'm fine," he says, voice shaking, "I'm not sick, I just…"

Hannibal peers in so close that Will felt a warm breath across his lips. He bites back a sudden urge to moan. "You have no food you're allergic to?"

"No," he whimpers, "I just need to go lie down, ok? I'm…"

"Here it is!"

His mother hands Hannibal his bag, and Will sits there in humiliation as Hannibal takes out a small flashlight shining it in his eyes. The red haze returns almost immediately and he closes his eyes.

"Keep them open," Hannibal purrs, making Will feel warm, "Let me see."

Will blinks and stares up at him through the red haze.

Hannibal seems almost to smile for a moment before he sighs. "Leanne, could you leave us for a moment? I think your presence is making him nervous."

"But…"

“Please.”

Will feels instant relief when she’s gone and the red haze waned as Hannibal puts a hand to his cheek. “Do you take any anxiety medications, Will?”

He frowns. “No.”

“Hmm.”

“I mean, I get anxious sometimes but…”

Hannibal shuts off the flashlight and lets him go as he sits down in the chair beside him. He pulls out a pad and writes something down. “I think you’d benefit from them. I know I’m not your doctor and you’ve only just met me, but this situation is....difficult.”

“Yeah.”

“And I know Leanne’s enthusiasm has already been hard on you.”

Will blinks back tears and wipes his eyes with the back of his hand. “Yeah, but I don’t need pills.”

Hannibal hands him what is obviously a prescription. “It’s mild,” he says softly, “But I think it will help for moments like this. If you’d like to not get it that’s fine as well.”

Will takes the paper and then hands it back to him. “I’m fine, Hannibal.”

“You don’t want to be here,” Hannibal sighs, “And I’m sorry I caused you this pain. I thought I was helping bring a family together.”

“No, you didn’t do anything wrong. I get what you were trying to do.”

Hannibal smiles as he puts his hand on Will’s arm. The touch makes Will’s skin warm as it has since the first time but he finds he likes the feeling more and more. “I’m going to take your mother out on a little boat trip now. You’ll have a nice quiet house all to yourself. If there’s anything…”

“The wifi,” Will blurts out, blushing at interrupting, “I...no one told me the wifi password.”

“Oh,” Hannibal frowns, “I apologize if I’ve…”

“No, no,” Will says, shaking his head, “I just wanted to be able to watch stuff on my computer before I went to bed or play games maybe. It’s fine.”

“The wifi password is DeepBlue.”

Will smiles. “Mom didn’t ask what that was about?”

“She knows I enjoy swimming, and for now anything else I’m much more comfortable keeping between us.”

He pats Will's arm and when he stops touching it feels like a loss. "My lips are sealed."

"Are you feeling better?"

"Much."

Hannibal stands. "I will put away dinner, you can go to your room if you'd like."

"I…"

"Everything ok in here?"

Will watches Hannibal grab the prescription he'd written and tosses it along with the pad into his medical bag. "Will is feeling much better. I think it was a reaction to the fish," Hannibal lies, "Perhaps I undercooked."

"See? That's why I don't like fish!" his Mom says, leaning down over the chair to hug Will's shoulders from behind.

He stands up, lip curling, and frowns at Hannibal. "Have fun on your boat ride."

"We will," Hannibal says softly, his smile seeming forced, "Enjoy having the house to yourself."

Will tries not to run from the dining room, keeping his pace quick but slow, and has to listen to his Mom's excited squeals as they head out the door.

"Oh, I can't wait! It's gonna be so romantic!"

He gets to his room, tears off clothes, and sits on the bed in his boxers as he types in the wifi on his computer. The sound of more squeals make him turn the volume up high as he puts on a horror movie and lays down.

Today hasn't been completely terrible, but this crush on Hannibal makes it harder for him to find enjoyment being here at all beyond moments with him. Will knows hanging out with his Mom's boyfriend wasn't going to happen as much as he liked, and in the long run he's gonna have to deal with seeing things he doesn't want to.

Like his Mom riding Hannibal's cock at the dining room table.

He shudders, closing his eyes to block out the memory, and opens them again when someone screams on screen. The movie is one of his favorites, a classic slasher, and before long he gets engrossed in it.

Then his stomach growls.

Will pauses the movie and gets up from the bed to look outside.

The boat is still gone and probably will be for a while. Will bites his bottom lip for a moment as he thinks about getting dressed again but knows he could be quick. He opens his door,

peeks out, and hurries down the hallway toward what he guesses is the kitchen.

He pushes open the door and stares at what is probably Hannibal's favorite room judging by how expensive it looks. Everything is silver: the oven, the fridge, and even the countertops. Will finds the pantry off to the side with little searching, and sighs when there doesn't seem to be really much of anything snack wise. He grabs a box of whole grain cereal, and walks over to open the fridge. The organization inside makes him smile. Hannibal seems to label pretty much everything. Will pulls out a few containers and admires his handwriting before he grabs a bottle of water.

The trip back to his room is less of a run, and he's about to go back inside when he pauses seeing the door at the end of the hall.

Will knows he shouldn't.

He's sixteen years old, not six, and yet he sets the things he got from the kitchen down before heading toward the bedroom anyway. The decorations inside just scream his mother: pinks, purple, and gold everything. Will hates it immediately, though the comforter is a deep soft purple that he runs his hand over in appreciation.

Hannibal bought the comforter for sure.

Will figures out immediately which dresser belongs to Hannibal, and opens a few drawers touching things he knows he shouldn't. Hannibal likes soft things, judging by the clothes Will finds, and he resists the urge to pick up the silk briefs instead just running his fingers over them.

His vision seems a red haze as he opens the closet, and admires the perfect row of suits.

How his mother had landed someone like this he still didn't understand.

He runs his hand over the suits as well, sighing at the touch, and can't help but sit on the bed after the exploration. Will knows immediately he's on Hannibal's side and presses his nose to the pillow smelling that scent he's already begun to enjoy so much. His cock fills and he bits his lip looking around the room until he sees the hamper.

He shouldn't.

He really shouldn't.

Will runs over and opens the top, frantically searching, and finds a pair of blue silk briefs in the middle of the dirty clothes. He brings it to his nose and moans.

This is so bad, he knows it is, but runs from the bedroom anyway with the silk briefs in hand. He presses them to his nose, reaching in to take himself in hand, and begins to stroke.

"Hannibal…" he moans, back pressed against the door.

Will closes his eyes and imagines Hannibal's hand touching him as he jerks off. He bites his lip so hard as he gets faster that he tastes blood on his tongue and lets out a cry as he spills

into his palm. The feeling lingers as he keeps on sniffing the briefs, biting down on them, and when he opens his eyes again his vision is completely red.

He feels himself come down from the pleasure, tears in his eyes, and the briefs fall out of his mouth onto the floor.

“What’s wrong with me?”

The sound of another person’s screams makes his vision go normal again and Will’s suddenly exhausted as he walks across the room to look outside. There’s still no one outside. He walks over to the fallen underwear, hand shaking, and snarls as he suddenly rushes to the bed stuffing it into his pillowcase.

Will pants for breath, shaking, and sits on the bed. His hand is sticky, and he grabs his shirt off the floor to wipe off his mess.

His stomach clenches as he thinks about what Hannibal and Leanne are doing right now.

Are they fucking?

He lays on the bed in tears and bits down hard on his lip again.

It’s none of his business.

So why does it feel like it is?

Will closes his eyes and he hears someone in the movie talking.

“He’s a monster, Billy, and so are you!”

He reaches into the pillowcase and clutches Hannibal’s dirty briefs.

Tomorrow he’d find something else to occupy his time other than lusting after his mother’s boyfriend.

Cuz right now this summer felt like it would end in disaster.

Chapter 6

Will wakes up at six a.m. the following day and leaves a note this time before he heads out.

Going for a run.

-Will

He really isn't the running type of guy, not really, but after last night he needs to get out of this house. The briefs were still stuffed in the pillowcase but he'd forced himself not to touch them this morning.

The weird things that had been happening to him since he got here seemed to never end and giving in more to these overwhelming feelings about his mom's boyfriend would be a mistake. He needs to stay as far away from Hannibal as he can from now on no matter how good it feels to be around him.

Which was why Will was going to find Beverly again.

A new friend would be a good distraction.

He starts to run down the same path he'd used yesterday in hopes of finding Beverly again. There's no one sitting in the grass as he passes but he keeps running anyway. There's a chill in the air even in the hot summer this early in the morning, and Will basks in the breeze as he makes his way down the trail.

Even if he ends up finding no one being away from the cabin is better than being stuck there.

He stops a few yards down to take a deep breath, staring off into the distance, and is about to run again when he spots her.

Beverly is leaning down near a tree, seemingly looking at something, and Will walks over.

"Good morning."

She turns and smiles. "Mornin'," she says, eyeing him up again, "Shorts in the woods?"

"Isn't that what runners wear?"

"Not in the woods. You want ticks? That's how you get ticks."

He laughs. "I didn't think of that I just...wanted to run."

Her smile fades. "From what?"

Will shakes his head. "It's a long story."

"So you said last time. I got lots of time."

He's torn between spilling his guts and saying nothing at all so he just stands there instead.

"Maybe another time."

Beverly nods. "I get it."

"What...um...are you doing?"

She lifts up a little container that's filled with bugs. Will steps back and she smiles. "I collect these critters, feed 'em, and observe a few days before putting them back."

He frowns. "Why?"

"Cuz I like bugs?"

Will laughs. "Oh."

"And when we're here in the summer it's either that or go to drunken parties which aren't really my thing but I make appearances at sometimes. My parents want me to meet 'someone nice' so it's either that or let them get dates for me. I don't want to know the kinda girls my parents would pick out."

He nods. "My dad would always try to point out pretty girls when we were at stores and stuff so I get it. When I told him I was into guys too he started to point out EVERY guy, which was just...no."

She laughs. "You spending the summer with him?"

Will frowns. "No, it's...my mother."

"And we don't like her?"

"It's...complicated. Her and her boyfriend had been nice but…"

"The boyfriend is the guy in the suit who came running at you yesterday like you'd been missing for weeks?"

Will blushes. "Yeah."

"Hmm."

"What?"

She smiles. "Nothing. You wanna come to my house and have breakfast? My parents will be thrilled I'm hanging out with someone who isn't a bug or a bunny."

"Sure, though Beverly…"

"Bev," she says, standing, "Call me Bev. I usually introduce myself as Beverly to strangers but I think...we're not gonna be."

Will smiles. “Bev, I think...you should know I’m...I don’t have a lot of friends either.”

She pats his arm. “You do now, Will. Come on. We’re just around the corner.”

Will follows her as she heads for home, taking in the sights around him, and when they come up on a two story white house with red shutters he feels more at home here than the cabin down he’s gonna be stuck in for a few more months. “It’s nice.”

“Eh, it’s alright. We only come for summers.”

They head into the house and her parents are sitting at a rather large table for only two people. Both of them look surprised to see Bev at all let alone Will with her but their surprise quickly turns into smiles that are almost identical to Bev’s.

“Oh! You brought a friend!”

“Mom….”

Bev’s mom comes up to Will and grabs his hand. “Hello honey, what’s your name?”

“Um…Will?”

“Mom, leave him alone.”

“I’m Shari and this is my husband Paul. So happy to see Bevvy bring someone over. You here with your parents, Will?”

“Um, my Mom.”

Paul smiles as Will sits down at the table. “Who’s your mom, Will?”

“Um, Leanne Graham?”

Both of their smiles fall. “Oh. She’s...um...a very colorful lady.”

Will blushes. Of course his mother is known as the ‘colorful lady’ around here.

“Yeah.”

“Eggs, Will?” Bev calls out.

“Um, yes please.”

“So you’re staying with her and Dr. Lecter then?”

“Yeah.”

Bev brings over a plate with eggs, bacon, and toast for Will before sitting next to him. “Wait, *that* was Dr. Lecter? Mom you said he was good looking but...wow.”

“Bevvy!”

Bev smiles as she bites into toast.

Will looks at Shari, who's blushing. "I...just said he was handsome, that's all. He's also very nice. Dr. Lecter's been coming around here a very long time. Which if you'd come out of your room sometimes you'd have met him already."

He frowns. "He told me he just bought the cabin."

"Oh no," Paul says, "Hannibal's been there...a good number of years. He didn't come around for more than a few days until last year though."

Will picks up a piece of bacon.

Why had Hannibal lied to him?

"But it's nice to know Bevvy has someone to hang around with close by other than her woodland creatures. Feel free to come over anytime you'd like, Will."

He smiles. "Thanks"

Breakfast is nice after that, a normal family meal that Will isn't really used to but enjoys anyway. Bev brings him up to her room after and they watch a horror movie, much to his delight, before Will notices the time.

"Shit."

He's been gone almost three hours.

"What's wrong? Gonna turn into a pumpkin?"

Will frowns. "No, I just…"

There's a knock at Bev's bedroom door before Shari peeks in. "Will?"

"Yeah?"

"Hannibal is here. He says you forgot you had plans today?"

Will blushes. "Um...no?"

Shari frowns. "Well he seems to think you do. I think he's here to take you home, honey."

"Ok, I'll be down in a minute."

The minute the door closes Bev grabs his arm. "Are you ok, Will?"

"I'm fine."

"No, I mean...it's kinda weird, the way he's like...coming to get you. He does know you're not ten years old?"

Will laughs. “Yeah, I just think...my Mom. She thinks I might bail or something.”

She frowns. “Why?”

“I think I’ll save the long story for the next time I come over. If that’s okay.”

Bev points at him. “I’m gonna hold you to that.”

He nods. “Okay. Thanks, for this morning. I had a good time.”

“Me too, Graham. Come find me anytime, ok? And wait, let me give you my cell number.”

They exchange phone numbers and Will sends a smiley face before leaving the room to head downstairs.

He hears Hannibal talking to Bev’s parents before he sees him and the relief in his eyes is obvious. Will frowns.

His car is still at the house, why would Hannibal think he was gone?

“Will, I was just telling Shari and Paul about our boating trip yesterday.”

“We’ll definitely take you up on that offer, Hannibal,” Paul says, “Especially if it’s a night trip. Shari loves to see the stars at night and our boat has seen better days.”

“I will check our schedule. Will, did you have a good time?”

Will blushes. “Yeah.”

“Excellent,” Hannibal says, “Thank you for showing Will such hospitality. I’m certain you’ll see him again soon.”

“Have a good afternoon, honey! Come by anytime!”

“Thanks.”

Will is bright red by the time they leave the house and he doesn’t speak at all as they head down the trail. “The Katz family are very friendly, Will. I think…”

He turns around fast and glares at him. “I left a note this time. Why...you didn’t have to come pick me up like I’m ten years old.”

Hannibal frowns. “I...didn’t know you’d be upset about my retrieving you.”

“I’m sixteen,” he sighs, staring at the forest floor, “And I’m not...I have to be here, Hannibal. You don’t have to worry I’m gonna just run home or something.”

“Will…”

“I’m gonna go back again and hang out with Bev,” he says, looking up at him, “It was nice and...if I’m stuck here for two months I can’t spend all my time with you.”

“I understand,” Hannibal sighs, “I was merely...being courteous. I will refrain from retrieving you in the future.”

“Thank you.”

They start to walk again and Will’s annoyance fades. “It’s nice out here.”

“Yes, I quite enjoy it.”

“Bev’s parents, they said...you’ve been here a long time.”

Hannibal doesn’t answer him so Will continues.

“You told me you bought the cabin last year when you met my Mom.”

“I…”

“Lied?”

“Will…”

“I’m not sure why you lied, but I would guess Mom thinks you bought it last year too.”

“Leanne does, yes.”

Will stops again. “Why did you lie?”

“Your mother,” Hannibal sighs, “She...*enjoys*...when I buy her things. I thought it much easier to deceive her than risk losing a cabin I’d grown to think of as a second home.”

“You didn’t have to lie to me.”

“No, but I was unsure if you’d expose the truth and didn’t want to face her upset.”

Will frowns. “I don’t know why you’d put up with that. I know if I had a....boyfriend or girlfriend...who seemed so into my money I’d…”

Hannibal touches his arm. “What would you do, Will?”

He feels that warmth again and leans into it staring up into Hannibal’s eyes. “I wouldn’t still keep them around. I’d want someone who wants me for me, someone who...just wants…”

“Yes?”

Will blushes and steps back. “Nothing, I...just think it’s weird that’s all.”

“I see.”

They get to the cabin and Will sees his mother is in the water swimming. His lip curls as he stares out at her.

“Leanne enjoys the water.”

“I can see that.”

“If you’d like to go in, I’m sure…”

“I’m gonna go watch a movie or something,” Will mumbles, “I...I’ll see you later.”

Hannibal’s frown makes Will’s chest hurt. “Of course.”

He waits until he gets in his room before letting out a long breath.

The feelings he had around Hannibal were really too much. Will looks up and blinks when he sees a change in his room. There’s a television on his dresser. He picks up the remote and sees it’s got streaming apps on it already clicking to see them open immediately.

He smiles and stares down at his arm.

There’s no blue mark there.

Will hops into bed and puts on one of the movies he and Bev had been hoping to watch.

This morning hadn’t been all that awful, and really Hannibal coming to get him was probably just his weird European ways. He didn't mean to make Will feel like that.

Will reaches into the pillowcase and feels the briefs there pulling them out again. He frowns when he sees them.

They’re dark green.

He could’ve sworn they were dark blue.

Will presses his nose to them and the scent makes his whole body warm. He puts them back in his pillowcase and resists the urge to touch himself again.

He must’ve thought they were blue last night cuz it was dark.

Will turns the volume up on the movie and smiles.

Today had started out really good.

Maybe this summer wouldn’t be so bad after all.

Chapter 7

Will gets so lost in the movie he doesn't realize it's almost noon until there's a knock at his door. "Yeah?"

Hannibal peeks his head in. "I've brought you lunch, if you're hungry."

He blinks before he pauses his movie. "Um, sure."

Hannibal carries a tray inside and closes the door behind him setting what looks like a sandwich and soup over Will's lap. "Tuna melt with Swiss cheese, tomato, and garlic sauce on a brioche bun. Roasted garlic potatoes sprinkled with ranch dressing and sweet tea."

He suddenly hears his stomach growl and blushes. "Thanks, you didn't have to—"

Hannibal sits on the end of Will's bed and frowns. "I wanted to make up for my error with your new friend, Ms. Katz. I didn't mean to embarrass you."

Will picks up his sandwich and takes a bite. He moans at the taste. "Wow, this…is so good. You've definitely made up for it."

He smiles. "Good," he says, looking at the movie Will's almost finished with, "What are you watching?"

"It's just something stupid. You wouldn't like it."

Hannibal looks back over his shoulder at him.

"If this film is stupid then you wouldn't have been occupied by it for hours. What is it?"

"This horror slasher thing. The guy kills people who rent his cabin."

"That doesn't seem like a very good business model."

Will laughs. "No, but it's still a movie."

"May I see this misguided renter in action?"

"*You* want to watch a horror movie?"

"Yes."

"It's almost over."

Hannibal looks at the screen. "Then I'll get to see the very best of it I assume."

"My mom—"

“Is napping. Please, Will?”

Will presses play and starts eating in between watching the movie. The guy on screen is carrying an axe and staking the last woman alive as he bites down into his sandwich again.

“He’s being very loud,” Hannibal mumbles, “I’m surprised she didn’t hear him.”

“People not hearing loud other people seems to be a staple in movies like this.”

“As I’ve never watched a film like this before I wouldn’t know.”

Will’s finishing up his sandwich when he answers. “You’ve never watched a horror movie before?”

Hannibal frowns back at him. “No? Should I have?”

“Well, I mean, most people have. It’s sort of a...rite of passage to see at least one.”

“Then I should watch a full one after this with you, should I not?”

Will pops a potato into his mouth. “I mean...you want to?”

Hannibal smiles at him before turning back to the movie. “I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t,” he says as the killer suddenly shoves the axe into the woman’s head, “Now that is a sufficient way to kill someone but really does take all the fun out of the chase, doesn’t it?”

WIll laughs. “I guess, but this is the ending so some of the time the bad guy gets what he wants.”

He watches Hannibal lean forward. “Does that happen in all of these movies?”

“Not all, but some. There’s usually one final girl or boy at the end who gets the bad guy in most of them.”

Hannibal looks back at him again. “Final girl or boy?”

“It’s a horror thing,” Will says, sipping his drink, “Though there’s some of these where the bad guy *wants* the final girl or boy so they leave them alive in order to like...mold them into their ideal murder partner. Not a lot, cuz it’s not a really popular trope, but some. I…”

The boyfriend who everyone thought was dead suddenly comes out and stabs the axe murderer in the back with a pitch fork yelling out. Hannibal watches with interest and Will feels a warmth pool in his belly. He sets the tray down and moves a little closer. Hannibal’s scent makes the warmth grow and he doesn’t fight it.

“Is that the final boy?”

“Yeah,” Will says, unable to stop smiling, “He won.”

Hannibal turns to frown at him. “Can we watch another?”

He blushes. “You really want to?”

“I find it oddly fascinating,” he muses, smiling again, “I was aware there were these types of films but I’ve never seen the content. Is there one where the murderer molds his final girl or boy into the killer he desires to share a life with?”

“I mean, there’s not a lot, but I can find one. You sure my Mom isn’t gonna get annoyed you’re spending the afternoon watching crappy horror movies?”

“Leanne wasn’t feeling very well after her swim, I don’t expect her to wake up any time soon. I’d like to spend the afternoon doing this with you, if you’d allow me the privilege.”

Will knows he should probably say no. He’d already told himself this morning that he needs to stop feeding into this crush. But if Hannibal asks to spend time with him that's just him being nice, right? The guy is probably starved for attention that’s not Will’s mom jumping on his dick or spending his money. He breathes in Hannibal’s scent again, that wonderful aroma, and lets out a long breath before he smiles.

“Sure, we can watch one.”

Hannibal smiles back. “Thank you.”

They end up watching three movies: Murder Heart, Axe Man 2, and some older movie about a sea monster stalking this guy who he ends up taking under the sea with him at the end never to be seen again. Hannibal had been the most quiet for that one, hardly interrupting at all, and when it was over his eyes were that red Will had begun to like so much.

“That was...illuminating.”

“I thought it was kinda boring.”

He frowns. “How so?”

“I mean, he spent most of the movie just killing all the guy’s friends in the most boring ways and then really couldn’t talk or anything so he just drags some poor guy into his sea monster lair to...what? Eat him? Have sex with him? They didn’t really go out of their way to explain it.”

“Hmm, I suppose. The film was made in a time where explaining he felt compelled to take this man would be frowned upon, yes?”

“Yeah, guy on guy stuff back then was…”

“Then I suppose most of the film goers would think he was going to eat him?”

“Yeah.”

He watches Hannibal’s vision return to normal and almost misses the red. “Then they had to be vague about the monster’s intentions.”

“I guess.”

“Do you…”

Will’s door opens and they both look to see his mother staring in with bloodshot eyes. She glares at them both for a moment before changing to an obvious forced smile. “Is there a party going on that Mommy wasn’t invited to?”

Hannibal leaves the bed to come over to her. “How are you feeling, Darling?”

“Better,” she sighs, “But still goddamn tired. I threw up before I crashed so there’s that. I don’t know what this is.”

Will’s lip curls as Hannibal puts his hand on Leanne’s forehead. “You’re still warm. I think you should go back to bed. Wouldn’t want to infect anyone.”

“Come with me,” she whines, grabbing his arm, “Rub my back?”

“Yes, of course,” he says, sounding less than happy before turning to Will, “Will.”

He nods once before leaving Will alone again.

The room feels like less for not having him in it.

Will suddenly has a desperate urge to go swim. He pulls off his shirt before getting up from the bed, and kicks off his shorts. The one pair of swim trunks he brought are shoved at the bottom of his underwear drawer. They’re green, the same color as Hannibal’s briefs Will has hidden away, and as he puts them on he feels this need for the water grow.

He’s never been one for swimming, not really, but when he practically runs outside it’s like he needs to swim or die.

The sun is close to setting as he hits the water and immediately goes under. He expects the water to be cold but the feeling is almost better here, warmer, and when he starts to swim away from the house he feels freer than he has in days.

Why hadn’t he done this sooner?

Will’s body underwater is something not unlike the warmth he feels with Hannibal. He embraces the warmth, vision turning red again, and when he comes up for air the sun is down. Will gasps for breath, shaking as he stares back at the house only to see he’s not alone.

Hannibal is watching him from the edge of the lake.

He feels compelled to swim back, wanting to be near Hannibal again, and stops just short of the edge.

“You’re a very good swimmer.”

Will blushes. “I...thanks.”

“Are you finished or would you like to spend more time in the water?”

“I…”

“Your mother is asleep again, and I’ve already given her dinner. I don’t believe she’ll be waking up again this evening.”

Will frowns. “Is she ok?”

“I believe she’s got a twenty four hour type of flu, it’s not uncommon to come on like this. She’ll be better in the morning. Are you ready for dinner or would you like to swim some more?”

“I’d like to swim a little more, I...haven’t swam in a long time. It’s nice.”

Hannibal smiles. “Would it be alright if I joined you?”

Will feels a warm pool into him at the thought. “Yeah, that...would be ok.”

“I will go change. You can swim as far away as you want again while I’m gone. I’ll find you, don’t worry.”

His cock aches as he thinks about Hannibal searching the water for him. “O..kay.”

“I’ll find you,” Hannibal repeats, his eyes suddenly red, “Go.”

Will plunges below the water and takes off excited for Hannibal to return. He knows this is a bad idea, being alone again, but it’s not like Hannibal is hanging around him for any reason other than to be nice. He’s gotta take what he can get.

The lack of other people on their side of the lake is nice, and Will ends up swimming all the way over to where they’d been with the boat just yesterday. He comes up for air, shaking at the sudden breeze, and looks out at the moon.

A minute later a splash makes him turn in time to see Hannibal emerge from the water. “What a lovely night for a swim.”

“Wow, that...was fast.”

Hannibal smiles and Will can’t help but admire how handsome he looks soaking wet. He remembers seeing him emerge from the water that first time, but this feels different.

“I’m a fast swimmer.”

“Obviously,” Will laughs.

“You are an excellent swimmer, Will. Did you swim much at home?”

“Not really,” Will says softly, “Just some summers when we went away. The closest I got to a body of water was then. Otherwise it was just the shower or the school pool.”

Hannibal frowns. “That’s a shame.”

“I’m here now,” Will says, swimming closer, “So...that’s something.”

“Yes.”

“You swim a lot?”

“Every chance I can get, the water...feels like home to me more than anything else.”

Will feels a sudden ache in his chest. “Does she come with you?”

“Leanne? Sometimes, but I swim often when she’s asleep. Your mother...can get...amorous in many types of situations.”

Will’s lip curls as he moves away. “Oh.”

“I apologize, I know it makes you uncomfortable.”

“No, I mean, you’re dating her. It’s not like I didn’t think you guys…”

“Will..”

“It’s fine,” Will sighs, “Just...don’t tell me about it and try to be quiet so I don’t walk in on it again.”

“Yes, of course.”

He resists the sudden urge to ask some inappropriate questions and instead decides to take advantage of the feeling he’d had earlier. “Think you can find me again?” he says, watching Hannibal’s frown turn into a smile.

“Only one way to find out.”

Will takes off under the water, his body a live wire, and is not very far when he feels Hannibal collide with him. He grabs Will tight and pulls them both up to the surface. He doesn’t let go, staring at Will with red eyes, and his skin is blue in the moonlight.

“Found you.”

He feels almost red hot this close, barely able to breathe, and yet makes no move to escape.

“I think you’d be able to find me anywhere,” Will whispers, staring at his mouth.

Hannibal licks his lips. “Perhaps.”

It would take very little for Will to kiss him now this close, barely an inch, and yet the thought of being rejected makes him suddenly pull away. He laughs it off, confused and a little humiliated.

“I think it’s time for dinner. Race you!”

He takes off without even looking back, vision tinged red under the water, and when he's up again Hannibal is already waiting. That same look he'd given Will when his arms were around him is still there, and Will tries to tell himself it doesn't mean anything even as his body warms under the intense gaze.

"You win," Will says, shivering as he steps out of the water.

"Do I?"

Will looks at him again. "I…"

"I'll call you for dinner. I'm sure you'll want to shower and change," Hannibal murmurs, turning to head for the house.

Will watches him go, taking in the sight of his ass in those speedos, and feels oddly like he did something wrong. Was Hannibal mad at him for cutting their swim short? He frowns as he heads in after him, and goes right to the bathroom to shower.

The swim had been great, better than anything Will's felt in a long time, and his confusion about Hannibal's sudden dismissal lingers even as he showers. Will remembers the intensity of his gaze when he'd held him, the feeling of the closeness, and can't help the desire that makes his whole body warm again. He gives into the urge to touch himself, eyes closed as he imagines they're back in the water, and thinks about what would've happened if Hannibal had kissed him.

Will bites back a moan as he strokes his cock, throws head back to feel the water spray over him, and speeds up his hand.

He can almost smell Hannibal the fantasy is so vivid, and when he spills into his hand he can't hold back a whispered moan. "Hannibal…"

Will leans against the shower wall as he opens his eyes, shaking from the intensity, and finishes his shower in a daze before opening the curtain. He freezes when he sees a fresh set of towels on the sink that he doesn't remember being there before.

He frowns as he wraps one around himself. Maybe he just hadn't noticed them, right? Cuz the thought of Hannibal coming in to hear him moan his name was a humiliation Will didn't need.

Will steps out into the hallway with his dirty clothes, and walks back to his room still wiped from the feeling of his orgasm in the shower. He's never felt anything like that before, and the need to feel it again is already there.

He lets the towel drop as he climbs onto his bed, and grabs the green briefs bringing them to his nose.

Will know he won't get hard again so soon but still begins to stroke himself leaning back on the bed. He imagines Hannibal pushing him against the lake's edge, rutting against him as they taste each other, and when he can almost feel Hannibal thrust into him he covers his

mouth stroking harder. His cock is hard, he can feel it, and the very idea of coming again so fast is crazy but he needs it.

He can feel Hannibal's mouth on the back of his neck, almost biting down, and comes so hard again he can barely move. Will opens his eyes, shaking, and grabs for the fallen towel to clean himself up.

What was that?

And why did he feel the sudden urge to do it again?

Will falls back on the bed, his whole body warm, and stares up at the ceiling.

He had a feeling the next two months would be filled with awkward orgasms like this.

Hopefully he could get over this crush soon or this summer was going to end in humiliation.

Chapter 8

Will smells something cooking when he goes into the hallway not even an hour later, obviously meat this time not fish, and can't help but go take a peek in on his mother. The door is ajar as he peers in and there she's still sound asleep. He's oddly happy about that, which is all kinds of wrong, but he feels no guilt as he walks down the hallway toward whatever smells so good.

He pushes open the kitchen door and sees Hannibal's back to him as he works at something on the stove. Will bites his lip as he watches him move, that same familiar heat rushing to the surface, and is about to go wait to be called when Hannibal turns around.

"Hungry?"

Will blushes as he steps into the kitchen. "Starving."

Hannibal tosses something into the pan in front of him. "Dinner will be ready soon. If you'd like I made some brownies earlier that you can have. They're in the refrigerator."

"That won't spoil my dinner?"

He smiles back at Will. "I won't mind."

Will opens the fridge and takes out one brownie that he pops into his mouth. The taste makes him moan as he gobbles the whole thing right up as he lets the fridge door close. "This is so good."

"Thank you. If you'd like we can go into town tomorrow and get some food that's to your liking. I'm sure you miss some of your favorite snacks."

"I'm fine, it's…"

"You're a growing boy, Will. It's best if you have everything you desire at your age."

He feels his cheeks blush hard as he bites back a response.

What if what I desire is you?

"I just don't want you to go out of your way."

"It's no trouble at all," he says, not turning, "I want you to enjoy your time here."

Will watches him flip something in one pan and moves closer to see clearly. "Steak?"

Hannibal smiles at him. "I thought perhaps you'd grown tired of fish. I also put together a salad, it's chilling in the refrigerator."

Will smiles. "Looks good."

“Thank you. I’ll call you once everything is---”

“Can I stay? I mean, can I watch you cook?”

Hannibal blinks. “You...want to watch me cook?”

“I mean, if you don’t want me to stay I can---”

“No, no,” Hannibal says, grabbing something from off left of him and pouring it onto the steak, ‘You’re more than welcome to watch. I’m just not used to being watched when I prepare meals.”

“You sure it’s ok?”

Hannibal smiles back at him again and his skin looks just a bit blue. “Yes, it’s fine.”

Will climbs onto the stool at the end of the counter and watches him prepare. There’s something graceful about the way he moves, almost like how he swims, and Will finds himself admiring him more than he already had.

This was a bad idea to stay, he knew that, but he didn’t want to leave.

Hannibal turns off the stovetop and plates their steaks, pouring something over them both.

“Can you get the white bowl from the refrigerator, Will?”

“Sure.”

Will gets up off his stool and grabs the bowl just as Hannibal carries out their plates. He’s even more starving now that the food is done, and sits down at Hannibal’s left side as he’s handed his plate.

“Thanks.”

“You’re welcome.”

Will grabs some salad and puts it on his plate before he takes a bite. It’s got some sweet dressing on it, and what looks like pieces of steak as well. “I think this is the least elaborate meal I’ve had since I got here.”

“Is that good or bad?”

“Neither,” Will admits, “I just wasn’t expecting it.”

Hannibal pours something into the glass in front of Will from a bottle and gives himself the same.

“Wine?”

“It’s a...homemade liquor I brew myself. If you don’t wish to try that’s fine.”

“I’m sixteen.”

“I’m aware,” Hannibal teases, “But no one is here to see.”

Will takes a sip and feels warm fill him. He licks his lips. “It’s sweet.”

“Yes.”

“Good though.”

“Thank you.”

Will can feel Hannibal’s gaze on him as he cuts his steak and puts a piece into his mouth. He sighs as he chews, suddenly ravenous, and begins to eat a little too fast. “Will…”

He hears nothing as he cuts more, shoving pieces into his mouth so fast he doesn’t know why he isn’t choking. The steak is rare he realizes after the fourth piece, tasting blood on his tongue, something he’s never had before.

“Slow down, Will,” Hannibal says, grabbing his hand and making Will look at him.

His eyes seem red again, and his skin is bluer than Will’s ever seen it look before. He’s shaking as he stares at him. “I’m sorry, I don’t…”

Hannibal frowns and squeezes Will’s arm. “Are you alright?”

“I just felt really hungry.”

“It’s alright,” Hannibal says softly, “The food isn’t going anywhere. If you’d like mine as well when you’ve finished you’re more than welcome.”

“No, I…”

“I’m more than content with my salad.”

Will blushes and stabs his fork into another piece putting it into his mouth. The blood is still there, and makes him warmer as he swallows. Hannibal made this for him, and that feels important. “Thanks.”

“You’re a growing boy,” Hannibal purrs, standing and letting the cut up pieces of his steak fall onto Will’s plate, “Like I said before, it’s best if you have everything you desire.”

He smiles. “Any kid of yours is gonna be spoiled rotten,” he teases, taking another piece, “It’s pretty frowned upon to give even teenagers everything they want.”

Hannibal’s hand is still on his arm and Will doesn’t want him to move. The touch doesn’t feel the same as it had just days ago. Maybe he’s grown used to it. “What we need and what we desire can be the same thing, Will. It’s not wrong to give into urges, especially ones that come on strongly like that.”

“All of them?” Will asks, unable to help himself.

“Within reason,” Hannibal says, patting his arm again before he lets go.

He feels the loss and almost misses the weird blue mark that isn’t there. Dinner is mostly quiet after that, with Hannibal still attempting to coax Will into going into town for snacks that he doesn’t need. They both finish and Hannibal refills Will’s glass before heading for the kitchen

The liquor has him feeling a little buzzed but he still takes a sip.

His dad once let Will take a couple sips of his beer when he was eleven. Will remembers vividly spitting it out onto the ground and Dad laughing.

“Someday you’ll like it, kid.”

Will doesn’t think Hannibal would’ve laughed if he’d spit this out. He smiles and drinks some more. The taste makes him warm and happy. It’s been a long time since he’s felt this happy.

Hannibal comes back in carrying two bowls.

“I apologize for not putting much work into dessert,” he says, setting a bowl in front of Will.

The food inside looks like ice cream but it’s dark red, and when Will takes a bite he shivers as the cold taste hits his tongue. “What is it?”

“Blood orange sherbet,” Hannibal says, taking a bite of his own, “This is my first time making this dish so I didn’t attempt to add much. Do you like it?”

Will blinks and his vision is a red haze. He takes another bite and stares at Hannibal who smiles patting his arm. “I…”

“How does it taste?”

“It’s...sweet.”

“Good, I was worried you wouldn’t like the taste.”

He blinks again and things seem normal as he takes a few more bites, nearly growling as he finishes super fast. Will’s mouth feels cold and warm both as he shivers all over.

“Will?”

“I don’t...what…”

Hannibal rushes to his side and puts both hands on Will’s cheeks. He stares down into his eyes and frowns. “Breathe with me, Will.”

Will lets out a long breath, still shivering, and Hannibal's eyes seem red again fast. He reaches out and touches his face. "Your eyes...why...why do they always look red?"

"It's a family trait," Hannibal whispers, running his warm hands across Will's cheeks, "I'm sorry if it frightens you."

"No, no it's...pretty."

He smiles down at him. "Thank you, Will. Are you feeling better now?"

Will nods, still a little fuzzy. "I...feel weird."

"Tell me."

"I feel like...I'm fading."

Hannibal shakes his head. "No, Will. You're not fading, you're….growing. There's nothing wrong with that but it can be frightening."

He feels tears fill his eyes. "I don't…"

"I think it's best if you went to bed now," Hannibal whispers, helping him up from his chair, "I'll…"

Will falls into Hannibal, still feeling fuzzy, and Hannibal suddenly lifts him up into arms. He stares at him. "I…"

"I'll carry you."

"I'm not a baby," he mumbles, his eyes heavy.

"I know, Will. I know."

Hannibal's scent is so strong as Will leans into his neck, and he feels that familiar warmth he likes so much. "Mmm...you smell good."

"Thank you."

Will doesn't remember the trip down the hallway but soon he's in his bedroom being laid down. He smiles up at Hannibal and pats his cheek.

"I liked the orange stuff," he mumbles, making Hannibal smile.

"A bit too much."

"Yeah," he sighs, struggling to take off his shirt, "A *lot*."

Hannibal helps him get off his shirt, and Will frowns when he moves to go. "Hannibal…"

"Yes, Will?"

“I like you, too.”

His eyes are barely open then but he sees Hannibal’s smile widen as he pauses in the doorway.

“I like you too, Will. Goodnight.”

Will rolls over and pulls up the blankets still wearing his sweatpants. He hardly remembers falling asleep but wakes up with a sudden urge to pee so bad he nearly falls out of bed running to the bathroom.

He goes to pull out his phone in the bathroom after he’s done but finds it’s not there.

Weird.

It must’ve fallen out of his pocket.

Will heads back into the bedroom after washing his hands and stops when he sees it.

The screen is crunched.

“Shit.”

He grabs the phone off the floor and his eyes fill with tears. What is he gonna do? Dad doesn’t have the money to get him another phone and he’s stuck here instead of his summer job. Will sighs and sets the phone on the bedside table.

Last night was a blur.

He doesn’t even remember going to his room.

Will falls back on his bed and closes his eyes.

This summer had barely begun and already it was a mess.

Chapter 9

Will barely pays attention at breakfast he's so upset about his phone but Leanne seems better so she does most of the talking.

"...and that bitch said I gave her a ten but I know I gave her a twenty! The manager offered me a coupon but I was so upset I tossed it back in his face. They want to steal my money and think I'll go back there? Pshh!"

He pokes at his omelete, frowning as he thinks about having to tell his Dad.

"Will, are you alright?"

Will looks up and forces a smile. "Yeah, I'm fine. Just...tired."

"Oh, I see."

"I know I'm not tired," his Mom says, picking up a piece of bacon, "I've slept so much in the past week I think I could stay up all night," she laughs, grabbing Hannibal's arm, "Maybe someone else can stay up with me."

Will's lip curls as he sees Hannibal touch her hand in return. "Can I be excused?"

"Of course, honey," his Mom says, "Maybe you can go see Beverly? She's such a sweet little thing. You should go see her! Hannibal and I…"

He rushes from the table without letting her finish and just starts to walk. The tears come before he can even get a few steps away and by the time he's halfway down the trail he stops to wipe his face.

"Will!"

Will wipes his face off more, sniffling before he turns around. "Shit."

Hannibal can't see him like this.

"Will, are you alright? You…"

He turns around, his smile even more fake than the last, and Hannibal frowns.

"I'm fine. You can go have sex with Mom or whatever. I'm gonna…"

Hannibal holds up his phone and he freezes. "I found this on your bedside table. Is that why you're upset?"

He sighs. "My dad is gonna kill me," he whispers, shaking his head, "And I don't even have like seventy bucks to get the screen fixed or something to…"

Hannibal grabs his arm and begins to pull him back toward the house. “Hey, what are you doing? I was going to Bev’s.”

“We’re going into town and getting you a new phone.”

“I don’t have any money and I’m not letting you buy me a phone!”

He turns and glares at Will. “Do you think me or your Mother would want you without one? You don’t know this area well, and it’s dangerous to be out in the woods alone. No, we’re getting you a phone.”

Will blinks back tears but doesn’t say anything even as they head for Hannibal’s Bentley. “Is Leanne…”

“Your mother isn’t feeling well so she’s laying down,” Hannibal says, making Will frown.

“She said she wasn’t tired.”

“She must’ve eaten something that disagreed with her.”

Will wipes his face as Hannibal opens the door for him. “Oh.”

Hannibal hands him his handkerchief and Will takes it. “For your tears.”

“Thank you.”

Will gets into the car and is taken aback at how strong the smell of Hannibal’s cologne is inside. He feels warm as he puts on his seat belt and doesn’t look at Hannibal for sure his crush show all over his face.

“All settled?”

“Yes.”

He wipes away more tears as Hannibal drives down the dirt road he only came in on a few days before.

“I apologize if I was harsh with you earlier,” Hannibal sighs, “I don’t want you to think I’m that type of person.”

Will looks at him. “I don’t think that.”

“I could tell immediately when you sat down for breakfast that something was wrong and knowing you left the house without a phone it...upset me.”

“I know,” Will mumbles, looking away, “I just…”

“I have plenty of money, Will,” he says softly, touching Will’s arm, “Enough to buy many, many phones. But nothing could replace you.”

Will smiles and feels a flutter in his belly at the words. “I know, I just...I don’t want to be *that* spoiled kid who gets everything when he messes up. I’m the one---”

Hannibal squeezes his arm. “It would make me happy to do this for you, Will. Let me.”

He nods and reluctantly pulls his arm away to stare out the window. The woods in which they live are more secluded than most in the area, Will notices, though he does see some houses as they pass by.

“What made you get a house out here?”

“I enjoy the water,” Hannibal says, “And the silence. There always seems to be noise in the city.”

“I bet my Mom hates it.”

“Leanne doesn’t seem to mind.”

Will smiles. “She hates it,” he says, “I don’t see her as the type to want quiet and swims any time other than the summer.”

“We’ve only lived in the house the past year but she hasn’t complained.”

“I’m sure you keep her busy enough not to want to.”

There’s awkward silence in Will’s unspoken meaning in that, and he blushes at how it sounded.

“Sometimes, yes,” Hannibal answers, making Will’s cheeks turn red even more, “But she complains about other things.”

He looks at him again and takes in his profile. There have been a lot of guys Will’s gotten crushes on over the years but Hannibal is above and beyond all of them. He’s not sure he’s ever seen a man this handsome outside of a movie before.

“I don’t see what there is to complain about,” he says softly, making Hannibal look at him again.

“You’d be surprised.”

They share a smile.

“I mean if I had a boyfriend who was as nice as you are, I don’t think--”

“Have you had many significant others, Will?”

Will pauses.

“I don’t mean to pry.”

“No, I...no. Not many.”

He suddenly feels like a loser at the question and blinks back tears, looking away.

“I find that hard to believe.”

Will laughs. “Yeah, right.”

“No, I am very much surprised. You’re a very handsome young man.”

Will feels so warm he opens the window but doesn’t look at Hannibal. “Not really.”

“Is that what people have told you?”

“I don’t want to talk about this, ok?”

Hannibal is quiet for a moment before he answers. “Alright.”

The rest of the drive they listen to classical music, which isn’t usually Will’s thing but it’s kinda soothing. He’s super thankful when they come upon a shopping center.

“The phone company I have is right over…”

Hannibal turns the opposite way and pulls across the street toward a different company, YTT. “But that’s not…”

They pull into the small parking lot outside and he parks before turning to Will. “You were worried your father would be upset with you over breaking your phone, yes?”

Will nods.

“I thought it best to put you under my own plan so he wouldn’t know of your mistake.”

“Hannibal, I can’t let you do that. It’s bad enough you’re gonna pay for my phone but..I mean we can just go see if the screen can be fixed or…”

“Your phone seemed to be damaged beyond a mere screen fix, Will. It’s this or I bring you to your father’s phone company and you have to explain why a brand new phone is on his bill.”

Will frowns.

He’s right.

“Am I just supposed to never use my phone in front of my Dad?”

“I’m certain he’ll not notice,” Hannibal says, unbuckling his seat belt, “Let’s go inside.”

Will feels super awkward as he heads into YTT with Hannibal, who instantly gets attention by everyone in the room. He feels uncomfortable by the stares, his lip curling when one woman tries to step in front of Hannibal and quickly stands at his side.

His teeth feel heavy in his mouth as he glares around them.

“Hello, we’re here to find a new phone for Will today.”

The man behind the counter gives Hannibal that same dazed look that everyone seems to, and Will’s about ready to leave even before they walk over to the phones.

“Sure, of course, can I get your name?”

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter.”

“Oh, a doctor?”

“That’s what he said,” Will snaps, letting out a huff, “Can you just show us the phones?”

The man, whose name tag reads Frederick, narrows his eyes at him before faking a smile.

“Just one second.”

Will walks away from them, still on edge, and finds his same phone but a newer model in the same silver. He winces at the price. Maybe he can get his same model? He walks past the line of phones and sees his model is about five behind.

He sighs.

“Frederick says you can pick whichever you like,” Hannibal says, starling him.

“They’re kinda expensive.”

“Will..”

He points to the phone he was looking at in silver.

Hannibal walks over. “Any preference on the type? One holds more storage than the…”

“Just whatever is cheaper,” he mumbles, “I don’t have my…”

Hannibal pulls out Will’s other phone. “I will show this to Frederick and ask if anything can be transferred. If you’d like to wait in the car, I can give you a key?”

Will nods and takes the key almost running to get in the car. He lays back and closes his eyes breathing in Hannibal’s scent. His dick twitches as he remembers the last time he’d smelled Hannibal’s cologne so close up with briefs pressed to his nose. He blushes as he remembers.

“I’m such a weirdo.”

He opens his eyes in time to see Hannibal coming toward the car with a bag in his hand.

How much time has gone by?

Will frowns.

He doesn’t remember.

Will unlocks the door and Hannibal slips into the driver's seat handing him the bag.

"Frederick was able to transfer everything," he says, smiling, "Apparently there was a bit more life left in your broken phone."

Will frowns. "You said it wouldn't turn on."

"I was wrong."

He opens the bag as Hannibal buckles himself up and takes out the phone already in a similar colored case as his last. It's the nicest phone Will's ever had, and he knows that even before touching anything. "Thanks," he whispers, "For...this."

Hannibal grabs his arm and Will can't help but look at him. "You're welcome," he says softly, "Now...I think..since we're in town...we should go grocery shopping."

Will smiles. "Did you drag me all the way out here to get your way about snacks?"

"It was...an unexpected benefit of the trip. "

He laughs.

Grocery shopping is a lot more fun than Will remembers it ever being before, and as they walk the aisles not five minutes later he's sure the extra benefit is Hannibal. Hannibal likes to explain pretty much every single thing he puts in the cart, and to Will's surprise everything he says is interesting and just a little funny. He's smiling so hard by the time they get to the snacks that he throws in things without complaint and starts sharing his guilty pleasure foods along the way.

"I like strawberries," he says, smiling, "But with peanut butter."

"I'm not certain I've ever had that combination."

"It's good, you should. I like peanut butter with pretty much everything."

He hardly notices the people in the grocery store like he did the phone store, mostly because Hannibal holds his attention. It's the most fun Will's hand since he arrived outside of their fishing trip, which is why he's so sad when they head for the checkout.

"There's gotta be three hundred dollars' worth of food here."

"Possibly."

"I can't believe you just.."

Hannibal's cell phone rings and he pulls it out of his pocket to answer. "Yes?," he asks, looking at Will, "Yes. No. Of course. I will bring some back with us. Yes. I...cannot wait either. Be home soon."

Will frowns. "Did she want something?"

“Your mother is craving french fries,” Hannibal says, his lip curling at the words, “I promised to bring them for her.”

He looks away. “Oh.”

The checkout line goes by fast despite all the things they bought, and putting it away goes faster. Will is a little let down by having to go back so soon but says nothing as he gets into the car.

Hannibal pulls into the nearest fast-food restaurant drive thru and Will realizes they’ve been out for about three hours when he sees the time on the car’s dash. “Oh wow.”

“What is it?”

“We’ve been gone a lot longer than I thought.”

“Time goes by quickly when you’re enjoying yourself. “

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Would you like anything?”

“No, I’m fine.”

“Will, it’s been several hours. If you’re hungry…”

“I said I’m fine.”

Hannibal pulls up to the order box.

“Hello, Welcome to Fuller’s. What can I get you?”

“Yes, I will have..a large french fry...and...two...strawberry sundaes.”

Will turns to look at him in surprise and Hannibal smiles at him. “Is that all?”

“Yes, but...do you have any peanut butter?”

“Um…yes? We have a peanut butter chocolate sundae that…”

“No, I’d like you to add peanut butter to the strawberry sundaes. Please?”

There’s a pause. “Okay, I’ll see what I can do. That’ll be ten twenty-three. Please drive up.”

Will’s smile is so wide his face hurts. “You didn’t have to do that.”

“I wanted to try this new taste sensation. It was not just for you.”

He laughs. “Okay.”

The cashier has that same dazed look that the people at the phone store did as she hands Hannibal their food. He gives her a twenty dollar bill. “Keep the change...Elise?”

She blushes and laughs. “Thank you, sir! I...enjoy your food!”

Will can’t even be mad about anything as they pull out of the drive thru right into a parking spot.

“Won’t my Mom be mad the fries are cold?”

“She’ll be fine.”

The strawberry peanut butter sundaes are….everything. Will feels both cold and warm tasting them and gets a sort of flashback suddenly to eating something cold last night. “Did we have ice cream last night?”

“Of a sorts,” Hannibal says, taking another taste of his sundae, “You were rather...intoxicated, so I’m certain you don’t remember much.”

Will blushes. “I told you not to give me that stuff.”

“I will take it under advisement in the future.”

They finally get home nearly thirty minutes later, and like Will expects Leanne comes out in a rather foul mood. “Did you get lost?”

“No, we stopped at the grocery store.”

“And?”

“The timeliness in which I get home is none of your concern, Leanne. Is it?”

She looks paler than Will remembers she was this morning. “I guess not,” she mumbles, scratching her arm as she looks at Will, “Did you have a good time?”

“Yeah,” he says, “Are you feeling better?”

“A little bit, baby,” she sighs, grabbing to pull Will into a hug, “But I’m glad my boys are home.”

Will gets out of her grip and helps bring in the rest of the groceries, saving his phone for last. Something tells him to hide the phone from Leanne so he takes the bag right to his room shoving it under the bed.

He heads back for the kitchen to help put things away but pauses when he hears raised voices.

“You were gone for almost FOUR hours!”

“I’m not sure why that matters, Leanne. We’re home now.”

“It matters because you left me here without even a fucking note,” she hisses, “And I wake up feeling like shit to find your car gone and you off doing god knows what with my underage son!”

Will hears an almost growl come from Hannibal and he shivers.

“What are you implying?”

“I’m implying that since Will got here you’ve spent more time with him than you have with me. The only time you even seem to want to be near me as when you’re *fucking* me.”

Will blinks and his vision is suddenly red.

“Is that what this is about?” Hannibal purrs, “Are you trying to pick a fight with me so I’ll be rough with you? Is that what you want?”

He steps back, trying to see normally again, and runs outside feeling so hot he’s ready to jump into the lake.

Will rips off his clothes one by one and jumps into the water, swimming away from the house and suddenly shouting loudly underwater.

He can almost picture Hannibal fucking her hard against the counter and doesn’t know why this is hurting him so much. Will gasps as he comes to the surface and sees Hannibal shirtless standing at the lake’s edge.

Will doesn’t know what to say.

They stare at each other for far too long before Hannibal turns to walk back into the house. Will stays in the water after he’s gone but feels like somewhere he’s still watching.

He doesn’t go back inside for almost an hour, his hair and body wet enough he drips a little on the way to the kitchen. There’s a dish on the floor and a shoe lying by itself next to it. Will gets a drink of water, still shaking, and refills his cup four times.

The walk back to his room is longer than it feels this time, and his chest hurts when he finds a jar of peanut butter on his nightstand with a spoon.

For any late night cravings.

Will takes off his clothes and climbs into bed shaking still.

What was wrong with him?

Every single day so far of this summer seemed stranger than the last.

And it hadn’t even been a week yet.

Chapter 10

Will wakes up the next morning earlier than usual but makes no move to get out of bed.

Something is wrong with him, he knows there is, and yet he feels like the worst thing he could do is tell someone. But he grabs his new phone anyway and brings up Dad in his contacts. He's put off calling him for days already and suddenly his homesickness comes back with a vengeance.

The phone rings twice before his Dad picks up.

"Did you forget it's summer, son? What's got you waking up so early?"

Will feels a sudden ache in his chest as he smiles rolling onto his back again. *"You're one to talk. If I was home you'd be getting me up in an hour anyway."*

His Dad chuckles. *"True. So...how's it been?"*

He sighs. *"It's...been."*

"That doesn't sound good. Is she treatin' you ok? She….I know she can be a handful."

"I...she's treating me...I dunno. I'm not sure she even likes me all that much. But she's been sick all the time so…"

His Dad is quiet for a second. *"What do you mean sick?"*

"She sleeps a lot," Will says softly, *"And she's been sick. I think it's the flu or something. But when she's awake she just...seems to not want me here."*

"Son, if she's mistreating you…"

"No," Will says, sitting up, *"I...I think it's just...awkward. I mean she's been gone since I was what a few months old?"*

"Yeah, somethin' like that."

"I wouldn't even be having that much fun at all if not for Hannibal."

"Who?"

"Her boyfriend," Will sighs, *"He's been really nice. He bought a boat, and we went fishing. I caught a lot. And he's just made this a lot less awful."*

"Leanne should be doin' those things with you," His Dad snaps, *"Not this stranger. She went out of her way to force you into seeing her after so long to just ignore you? Maybe I need to call my lawyer to get you home."*

“No!” Will says, suddenly scared at the idea of leaving, “No, I...it’s only been a few days. If things get worse or I feel bad I’ll tell you ok? I just…”

His Dad sighs. *“Call me day or night, Will. You know I’m up early and go to bed late. I’ll hop in my car and drive out there if I have to. Just...is she there? Can I talk to her?”*

Will freezes. *“Um...she’s probably still asleep.”*

“Then can I talk to his Hannibal? Is he up?”

“Dad…”

“I’m not gonna tell him you said anything, Son. I just want to be sure you’re being treated ok.”

Will gets out of bed, still naked from the night before, and grabs a pair of shorts from his drawer.

“He’s probably still sleeping too. I…”

A knock at his door makes Will pause. *“Yeah?”*

Hannibal peeks his head in. “I thought I heard talking. I hope I’m not interrupting.”

“Is that him?” Dad says, *“Let me talk to him.”*

Will sighs. *“I was just talking to my Dad. He...wants to talk to you.”*

Hannibal smiles and steps inside Will’s room to take the phone. “Of course.”

Will takes in Hannibal’s appearance today: A long sleeved dress shirt, no tie, and gray trousers. He doesn’t know how anyone can dress like Hannibal does in such hot weather but still Hannibal looks so good Will can’t complain.

“...of course. Yes. I will. I understand,” Hannibal says, looking at Will, *“It is my* utmost *priority, Michael. Yes, you’ve raised a wonderful young man. You as well. Goodbye.”*

He hands Will back the phone. “Take your time.”

Will puts the phone to his ear before Hannibal walks out but doesn’t say anything until he’s gone. *“Will? You there?”*

“Yeah,” he sighs, *“I’m here.”*

“He seems like a nice guy. Not sure how he got involved with someone like Leanne but…”

WIll laughs. *“Yeah, me neither.”*

“I think you’re in good hands. Just...if you feel like you want to come home, I’m only a phone call away.”

He blinks back sudden tears. *"I know, Dad."*

"I love you, Son."

"I...I love you too, Dad."

"If you wanna keep talking I can call and cancel the next guy comin' in with his busted up boat."

Will wipes his eyes. *"No, I'm fine. Go make some money. I'll call you again in a couple days."*

"Have a good day, Son."

"You too, Dad. Bye."

"Bye."

The silence on the other end makes Will suddenly want to call back but he puts down the phone. He throws on a blue tank top and heads out in the hall where he smells what has to be bacon. The dining room is empty when he walks in but the table is set for three. Will isn't overly excited to see Leanne at all after last night.

He pulls out his phone and texts Bev.

You up?

Define up.

Will smiles.

Up for company.

Sure.

The door to the kitchen opens and Will stuffs the phone into his pocket as Hannibal comes out carrying several plates. "Good morning."

He tries not to remember the way Hannibal was watching him on the edge of the lake last night but fails. "Good morning."

Hannibal sets down one plate of bacon and another with what looks like french toast sprinkled with powdered sugar.

"Your mother is still asleep, but I imagine she'll smell the bacon soon."

"If she's still sick this food won't help much at all," Will mumbled, grabbing some bacon and two pieces of french toast.

"Perhaps, but that's never stopped her before."

Will frowns as he takes his first bite. The taste is great but he feels little joy in the idea Leanne is coming in soon.

“Your father is quite worried for you,” Hannibal says, making Will look away, “Has something happened, Will? Did---”

A loud groan makes them both pause and Will can almost smell Leanne before she comes into the room. He remembers Hannibal’s words to her from last night and knows his own reaction was a bit too much but even now he wants to run.

“What smells so good in here, Darlin’?” she says, coming around Will’s back to throw her arms around Hannibal, kissing his cheek.

“I’ve made bacon and french toast.”

“Oh, yum!”

She sits down across from Will still wearing a robe that hangs off her shoulder just enough to expose skin.

“I thought perhaps today we could---”

Leanne grabs two pieces of toast and a lot of bacon before stuffing one into her mouth.

“We should go on the boat,” she mumbles, chewing, “As a family. You know it would be great to show Will off to our neighbors,” she grins, “Don’t you want to go out on the boat today, Sweetheart?”

Will feels like he might throw up at the very idea. “I…”

“I’m sure Will wants to visit with his friend again, Leanne. You were the one who wanted him to meet all the other teenagers.”

She frowns. “I guess, but…I’m finally feeling better. I’ve hardly gotten a chance to spend that much time at all with you, Sweetie. Don’t you want to spend time with Mommy?”

“Leanne, perhaps---”

“Sure,” Will says, forcing a smile, “I think it sounds fun.”

“Great! Hanni can make us some lunch, and we’ll just go out for a few hours. No fishing, just us three enjoying the fancy boat.”

“I suppose I could, but if Will wants to be with his friend…” Hannibal starts, frowning at Will.

“No, this’ll be fun. I’m gonna go plug my phone in to make sure it’s charged.”

He gets up from the table, feeling sick to his stomach, and runs into his room.

Leanne really seems determined to ruin his day very time he sees her.

Will sits down on his bed and texts Bev.

Can't come today. Mom wants to have a family boat trip.

That sounds awful. Tomorrow?

For sure.

He plugs in his phone though he really doesn't need to and looks for his swim trunks from the other day changing into them and laying back in bed again. The smell of the lake still seems all over him but he's got no time to shower now.

Plus there's no reason to if he's gonna jump in again soon.

Will smiles.

It's nice to be so close to the water. Comforting.

He turns on something and plays a few games before his door opens and Leanne smiles at him wearing, of all things, a leopard print bikini. "Come on, Sweetheart! Time for the fun to begin!"

Will thinks about being on the water again and for once in the presence of Leanne his smile is genuine. "Can't wait."

She all but runs down the hall carrying towels over her shoulder and Will sees Hannibal at the door wearing a pair of swim trunks this time. They're leopard print as well and Will can't help but admire the way he looks in them. "I've put our meals and drinks on the boat already," he says, holding the door as Leanne rushes for the boat.

Will moves to follow her but Hannibal grabs his arm. "Will, wait."

He frowns. "What?"

"I'm sorry for this," He sighs, "I know the idea of spending this much time with your Mother isn't ideal."

"It was gonna have to happen sometime," Will mumbles, "Might as well be this."

"Tomorrow I will keep her occupied so you can spend time with your friend."

Will all but snarls as he pulls out of Hannibal's grip, thinking about what type of things he'd be doing to 'keep her occupied.'

"Don't do me any favors."

"Will…"

He walks to the boat on edge, knowing the next few hours will be torture, but sits as far from the other two chairs as he possibly can.

“This is such a fancy boat, isn’t it? Nothing like any I’ve been on.”

“Yeah.”

“And it…”

Hannibal walks in between them to set a pile of towels next to Will’s chair. He stares at him for a bit too long as if to apologize again but Will looks away. The sooner they get this started the sooner they’ll get it over with.

He pulls out his phone and takes a picture of the house sending it to Bev.

What I wouldn’t give to be stuck inside today.

I’m sorry.

He sighs as Hannibal starts the boat up and drives them away from the house. Leanne squeals as they get further out.

“I love this!”

Will’s about ready to jump in the water already.

He zones out when Leanne starts the radio and blasts some old rock song. Will watches her from behind with thinly veiled contempt and for the first time wonders how this is his Mom.

When he was little he’d always wanted a Mom, wondered what his Mom was like and cried sometimes because his didn’t want him. Now he wishes she’d kept on not wanting him.

Will looks away fighting tears and is relieved when Hannibal stops the boat turning off the music.

“Aww, we’re stopping already?”

“I think here is as good a place as any.”

Leanne scoffs. “We could’ve driven further out.”

“And risk not having fuel for a return?”

“You didn’t fill it up?”

“There’s enough.”

“*Hanni…*”

Will rolls his eyes not looking at either of them.

“Not much to do other than swim on a boat anyway. It really doesn’t matter where we stop.”

“I wanted to show Will off to the Cartwrights!”

“Leanne…”

He jumps in the water to get away from their fighting and swims without surfacing. The water makes his whole body feel better and when he gets to the surface he smiles.

The boat is only a few yards away and he can see they’re still fighting. Hannibal looks angrier than Will’s ever seen him and he swims closer hoping to hear.

“I didn’t make him do *anything!* Maybe he wanted to swim!”

“He left the boat because of your childish whining. If you’re hoping to endure the boy to you, you’ve been doing a terrible job with how you’ve interacted with him so far.”

“He’s *my* son, Hannibal, not yours. I can interact with him any way I want! You…”

Will swims closer and calls out.

“You should come in the water! It’s warm!”

Leanne walks to the edge and smiles. “Look at you! A regular little merman!”

Will laughs. “Yeah, that’s me.”

“Will…” Hannibal starts, “…if we…”

“I just wanted a dip, it’s fine. I’ll come back up.”

“No, honey don’t let Mister Grumpy here make you. You can just stay in all you want.”

“No, it’s fine.”

Will swims closer to the boat and grips the edge climbing back in. He’s dripping wet when he gets on deck and Hannibal hands him a towel. He watches his skin turn bluish and smiles. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. You seem to be more and more comfortable with the water.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Perhaps—-”

“Hey, I know what we can do! Let’s play a game!”

They both turn to her.

“What type of game?”

Leanne grins. “Two truths and a lie.”

Will suddenly feels like this is a bad idea.

“Or we can play twenty questions. I’m pretty good at that. Dad—”

“No, no, that’s boring.”

Hannibal shares a look with Will before walking to the mini fridge. “I did bring along something else to liven up the day for the adults.”

He pulls out a bottle of wine. Will wonders if it’s the same stuff he got drunk on the other night.

“Just the adults?”

Hannibal smiles at him when he sits down. “Just the adults.”

“It’s eight o’clock in the morning!” Leanne laughs as Hannibal hands her a cup.

“It’s five o’clock somewhere.”

She giggles.

“We're still gonna play that game?” Will asks.

“In a moment.”

He watches Hannibal pour them both some wine and set it on the ground. “Cheers!” Leanne laughs knocking their cups together.

Hannibal sips a little of his but Will’s mom takes a giant gulp. “Oh, that’s good stuff.”

“Yes.”

“Now,” she says, her eyes already glassy, “Will honey you start. Two truths one lie.”

Will frowns. “I don’t…”

“Oh c’mon. It’s easy.”

“Ok,” he sighs, “I…hate dogs, I’ve never been kissed, and I…love boats.”

Leanne laughs. “Simple! Your daddy never liked dogs, so you probably don’t either and I know you love boats but an adorable kid like you not being kissed at sixteen? No way you’re that much of a loser. That’s the lie!”

Will blushes and forces a smile. “Yeah, you got me!”

“You’ve gotta make it harder!”

His chest hurts.

Why had he even said that?"

Will looks at Hannibal who seems wide eyed. Did he figure out which one was the lie?

"Hannibal's next. I'll totally get this one too."

Hannibal blinks and takes a sip of his wine before he speaks. "I worked as a juggler in a circus when I was sixteen, I like rock and roll music, and I…was orphaned at a young age."

"I know, it's—"

"The rock and roll music," Will interrupts, leaning forward, "Though now I want to know about when you were a juggler."

Hannibal smiles. "That's a story for another day."

"Why not now? We've got plenty of—"

"MY TURN!" Leanne all but yells, glaring at Will as he stands, "I once was arrested for showing my ass to a cop, I hate strawberries, and I…don't even know my own boyfriend after a fucking year."

"Leanne…"

She points at Will. "How does *he* know you're an orphan? You never talked about your family with me. Just kept ignoring me wanting to meet them and it's been DAYS and HE KNOWS?"

Will frowns. "We were just talking and…"

"No!" she shouts, stumbling back, "How is it that Will knows shit I don't, and you won't even…"

Hannibal sighs, turning to put the wine bottle away.

"You've had too much to drink, Leanne. Please just sit."

"NO!" She shouts, moving back further, "I wanna…"

Will knows she's gonna fall off the side of the boat before it happens. He makes no move to stop it, his anger already high, and even when she makes a splash into the lake he doesn't move right away.

Hannibal turns just as Will jumps in after her.

The water is just as warm as it hits his skin, and he dives down to grab her. Will feels her tense as they resurface, and she thrashes when she coughs up a lot of water. "LET GO OF ME! LET GO! I SAW YOU UNDER THERE! I…"

He frowns as she fights to get away from him. “Mom, calm down! It’s…”

“DON’T TOUCH ME! DON’T LET HIM TOUCH ME!”

Hannibal grabs hold of Leanne roughly pulling her back onto the boat, and she’s sobbing in his arms as Will climbs up again. “I didn’t…”

“Shh,” Hannibal whispers, soothing her as he stares at Will with an odd intensity, “Everything is going to be okay.”

It takes very little time at all for Leanne to pass out, and Hannibal wraps a towel around her before he lays her on the seat by Will. “I think it’s best if you sit up by me.”

Will blinks and sees red, nodding as walks across the boat.

“I didn’t do anything.”

“Perhaps your mother has some repressed memories that this event brought on,” Hannibal guesses, “I would not let yourself worry. She was quite intoxicated, judging by how easily she fell under. I think it best to bring her back to the house.”

“Yeah,” Will whispers, closing his eyes as Hannibal starts the boat again.

His vision is clear when he opens his eyes again and Will wonders what exactly his mother saw. He holds out his hands and blinks staring at his skin.

It looks blue.

Will squeezes his eyes shut again and opens them only to see his skin looking completely normal.

Maybe he really had woken up too early today.

They don’t say anything to each other the whole ride back and once they’ve docked Hannibal takes Leanne into his arms.

“I’ll retrieve the food later, Will. Don’t trouble yourself.”

“No, I can—-”

“NO! Just…go inside.”

Will does as he’s told, shaken from such a short trip, and goes right to the bathroom stripping off his trunks to wait for the shower to get warm.

He stares at his hands and remembers seeing them look blue.

Will can hear Leanne’s words echoing in his mind.

“I SAW YOU UNDER THERE!”

What had she seen?

And just who was she scared of?

Him? Or someone else?

He didn’t know.

But he was going to find out.

Even if it took him all summer long.

Chapter 11

Will lingers longer than he should in the shower, dreading the possibility of seeing either his Mom or Hannibal again. He hears nothing as he steps out into the hallway and walks into his room feeling just as bad as he did earlier.

The memory of the fear in Leanne's eyes makes his chest hurt as he puts on his clothes. No one's ever been scared of him before, and as much as he isn't her biggest fan Leanne is his mother. Why had she been so scared?

Hannibal's explanation that it was repressed memories didn't make him feel all that much better. It wasn't his place to find out what happened in Leanne's past but it feels like this is something he needs to know. Will thinks for a minute of calling his Dad but decides against it. His Dad already thinks Leanne might be mistreating him and this would only make things worse.

He stares at his hands, now looking just as they should, and remembers the blue. Will sits on the bed and takes out his phone to look up, "blue skin disorders" and "red vision." There are a few disorders that turn your skin blue but it's not temporary and the red vision disorder doesn't even apply to him.

He sighs and let's his phone drop onto the bed before he falls back to stare up at the ceiling.

"Great."

A sudden chime makes him pick the phone up again.

How's the boat ride from hell going?

We're home now.

That's good, right?

Kinda.

You still wanna come over?

Will thinks for a minute before he answers. What would Hannibal say if he left to go hang out with Bev? It really wasn't like he could do much here, and Leanne was more than likely sleeping again. He goes to answer when there's a knock at his door.

"Yeah?"

Hannibal opens the door a crack and peeks inside. "I was just coming to check on you after the...events...with your Mother."

He frowns. "I'm fine."

“You’re certain?”

Will blushes. “Yeah, I’m...I mean...I didn’t *do* anything and…”

Hannibal walks into the room and sighs. “No, you didn’t. You saved your mother from possible drowning and that’s quite heroic. Her reaction I’m sure upset you.”

“I don’t know what happened.”

“Leanne...has quite a checkered past. It’s not my place to explain things she’s not ready to tell you.”

He looks away. “Okay, I get that.”

“If you’d like...you can perhaps invite your friend Beverly over? The boat is, of course, docked but the two of you could enjoy yourselves still in some way? Or in your bedroom?”

Will looks at his phone and then at Hannibal. “She was just asking if I could come over.”

“She could come over here. I could make lunch for the two of you.”

He can almost feel how much Hannibal wants him to stay and can’t resist the possibility of letting him down. “Yeah, that sounds fun. I’ll ask.”

Hannibal’s smile is so big Will can’t help but smile back. “Excellent. Any preferences?”

“I’ll wait and see what Bev says first.”

“Of course. I’ll leave you to that.”

Hannibal goes to leave but Will suddenly remembers.

“Wait, how is she?”

“Leanne?”

“Yeah, I mean….”

“She’s asleep. I’m certain she won’t remember anything that transpired today. Don’t worry, Will.”

He frowns. “Okay.”

“I hope Beverly decides to come. I’d very much like to meet her properly. Her mother and father speak very highly of her.”

“I’ll tell her.”

Hannibal smiles. “Thank you. Let me know what your plans are once everything is finalized.”

He leaves and Will thinks for a minute about what to say.

You wanna come over here instead?

Sure. Now?

I'm ready when you are.

I'll be by in a few. Maybe we can order a pizza?

My mom's boyfriend kinda wants to make us lunch. He's a really good cook though.

Boyfriend? Oh you mean your keeper?

=P

Tell him to make us pizza.

I'm not even sure he knows how.

lol!

He leaves to go tell Hannibal and finds him in the kitchen already making what looks like a pizza crust. "Um…"

Hannibal looks up and smiles. "I took it upon myself to choose lunch with the hopes that Beverly is coming to visit."

"Yeah, she's coming. What are you…"

"Pizza," Hannibal says, "I assumed that it would be something you and Beverly would appreciate."

Will blinks. "Yeah, that's so weird cuz we were *just* talking about pizza."

"Then I chose well. I will refrain from toppings other than the cheese until your guest's arrival."

"Okay," Will says, smiling, "I can't believe you'd even think of pizza."

Hannibal frowns. "I'm not so pretentious that I don't enjoy things that are a bit...pedestrian."

Will laughs. "Yeah, sure. I'm gonna go wait for Bev on the porch."

Hannibal is still frowning as he turns to leave. "Alright."

He feels a little bad joking around like that but doesn't really know what to say so he leaves. Hannibal really didn't seem like the pizza type, not really, so his surprise shouldn't be all that shocking. He walks outside and sits on the porch, stomach in knots thinking he might've hurt Hannibal's feelings, and is so preoccupied thinking of that he hardly notices Bev's arrival.

“Wow, the boat ride must’ve been *really* bad if you’re still making that face.”

Will jumps at her voice, forces a smile, and stands. “No, I’m---”

“You really aren’t fine, Graham. I barely know you but this?” she gestures around Will, “Is not happy Will.”

He sighs. “It’s nothing, really. You wanna come see my room?”

“Way to change the subject.”

“C’mon,” he laughs, taking her inside, “We--”

“Hello again, Ms. Katz.”

Hannibal is standing in the doorway to the kitchen wearing an apron and holding a wooden spoon. Will can’t help but feel an odd warmth at the sight of him. “Bev, you remember…”

“Hey Dr. Lecter, “ she says, “Cooking?”

“Yes, I was coming to ask about your preferred pizza toppings?”

Bev grins. “Cheese is good for me. Will?”

“Um, I like sausage if you’ve got it but I can have cheese if it’s easier?”

“I’ve got plenty of sausage for you, Will,” Hannibal says, smiling and making Will blush, “And Beverly, I have already added the cheese so I will make it half and half.”

Bev looks back and forth between them. “I can’t wait! I’m sure it’ll be...yummy. Right, Will?”

“Um, yeah. C’mon Bev.”

He grabs her arm and all but pulls them down the hallway into his bedroom. The minute the door closes Bev whistles staring around his room. “Nice.”

“It’s not much.”

Bev scoffs. “You kidding? It’s bigger than my room and,” she walks up to Will’s TV, “Your tv is *way* nicer than mine. Wow. I didn’t realize you were spoiled.”

Will frowns and she laughs. “Your face!”

He sits on the bed and feels his cheeks start to turn red again. “I’m not…”

She sits on the bed and pats his arm. “I was joking, Graham. Chill.”

“I didn’t even pick out all this stuff. Hannibal did. I would’ve been fine with my laptop and a smaller room. I…”

“Hey, hey, I’m sorry. I thought I was being funny. I don’t think you’re spoiled, Will. Okay?”

“Okay,” he sighs, smiling.

“Though I have to ask.”

“What?”

“Is he always like that?”

Will frowns.

“Like what?”

Her smile widens. “Never mind. Now, what are we gonna do? Watch more ridiculous movies or…?”

“I was thinking we’d go on the boat later. I don’t think Hannibal trusts me yet to drive it but…”

“Oh yeah! I wanna see the fancy boat that chartered the trip from hell!”

Will laughs. “So first movie, pizza, and then the boat?”

“Aye, aye captain!” Bev teases, saluting him.

Will finds them something to watch, a slasher he hasn’t seen yet and Bev seems excited for.

“I’m so glad you’re into all this. I lost count of the number of times I’ve tried to start friendships and scared them off for my intense love of brutal murder.”

He laughs. “Glad to be your partner in blood.”

“My murder buddy.”

They lay side by side in Will’s bed for a while after that, laughing and booing at inappropriate things until a knock pulls them out of it.

“Yeah?”

Hannibal opens the door and frowns. “Lunch is served.”

“Thanks, we’ll—”

He takes off without even listening to Will.

“What’s got his panties in a bunch?”

Will frowns. “I dunno.”

They get up from his bed and walk down the hall. The scent of pizza makes Will's stomach growl and he leads Bev to the kitchen only to find it empty.

"Uhhh."

Would Hannibal set the table for this? He takes Bev into the dining room and there is Hannibal still frowning.

"The pizza is getting cold."

"Sorry I didn't think you'd…"

Bev bumps Will's hip. "It looks great, Dr. Lecter."

"Thank you."

They each sit at Hannibal's sides and he dishes out their pizza. "I used a mixture of ricotta and mozzarella cheese."

Bev takes her first bite and moans. "Omg I wanna marry this."

Will smiles. "I think that poor piece isn't marriage material anymore."

She pretends to pet the pizza. "She's gorgeous," she says, "Don't listen to him, Pizza. You're gonna make an amazing wife."

He laughs and sees Hannibal is smiling too as he looks between them. "I'd be happy to officiate."

Bev takes another bite. "See? Dr. Lecter knows true love when he sees it!"

Hannibal looks at Will for so long that he can't help but blush. "Yes, I most certainly do."

Will takes a bite of his sausage pizza and feels the warm spread knowing Hannibal made this just for him. He smiles at him shyly. "It's great."

"Thank you."

They stare for a second until Bev clears her throat making Will look up. She looks back and forth between him and Hannibal with wide eyes.

"Ohhh…" she says, "I get it now."

"Bev…"

Hannibal frowns. "Am I missing something?"

Will shakes his head as his blush deepens. "It's nothing."

"I see."

He feels like both Hannibal and Bev are watching his every move after that which makes his anxiety worsen to the point where he feels sick. This visit with Bev was supposed to be fun. Now he felt like she was gonna embarrass him any second.

Bev eats three more pieces and Will four before they're both lying back in their chairs sighing.

"That was...the best pizza I've ever had."

"That's a high compliment," Hannibal says, smiling, "I thank you."

"You deserve it. Whoever marries you is gonna be one lucky person."

Will frowns.

"Thank you," Hannibal says again, looking at Will, "Are you going to go on the boat later this afternoon? I can ready it for…"

"I think we'll go now," Will says, "Thanks, Hannibal. It was great."

He looks at Will and smiles. "You're welcome."

Will licks his lips and feels that warm spread through him. He really has never seen anyone as handsome as Hannibal is, and the way his eyes seem slightly red only makes Will more warm.

Bev clears her throat. "We gonna go, WIll?"

"Uh, yeah. Let's go."

"Thanks, Hannibal!" Bev calls out as she comes around the table.

"You're quite welcome, Beverly."

"If I do find the girl of my dreams I know just who to call for catering."

Hannibal laughs. "I will be there with bells on."

She laughs. "I'm sure you….will." she looks at Will, "And you probably won't be alone."

Will grabs her arm and leads her out of the dining room. "C'mon Bev!"

She's practically cackling when they get outside but doesn't say anything until they're away from the house. "So…."

"Bev...."

The boat only reminds Will of what happened earlier and his mood doesn't get any better.

"I get now why it was the boat ride from hell," Bev teases, sitting in the driver's seat, "You have a crush on your mom's boyfriend."

“I DO NOT!”

She laughs. “Will come *on!* I’m not blind!”

“I just…” Will sighs, covering his face with his hands.

"I mean, as far as older guys you could get a crush on you picked a good one. And….I mean...the way he looks at you…”

Will lowers his hands and frowns. “What...do you mean?”

Bev sighs. “Will...he was staring at you the same way you were him. If he’s *not* into you, then I don’t know what…”

“He’s just nice, ok? He wants me to like him because…”

“...he wants to kiss you?”

He feels a sudden flutter in his belly. “No, that’s...no.”

“Will…”

Will’s teeth feel heavy in his mouth and his vision suddenly reddens making him squeeze his eyes shut. “He doesn’t like me, ok?”

“Okay,” Bev whispers before he feels her grab his hand, “Hey I’m sorry. I was...sometimes my jokes don’t land for everyone else like they do me. Did I piss you off?”

He lets out a breath and feels himself relax before he opens his eyes. “No, I...I *do*...have a crush. A pretty big one.”

Bev smiles. “I know.”

“And he’s really nice to me. My mom...I didn’t tell you the whole story before.”

“I have time.”

“My mom filed for visitation just a few months back and won some so that’s why I’m here. Before that I hadn’t even seen her since I was in diapers.”

Bev’s eyes widen. “Oh, wow.”

“And I got here and she...I’m not even sure she likes me. But Hannibal...he’s just been so nice and he….”

She grabs his hand and squeezes. “I know you don’t want me to say it again but honestly? He really does seem to like you *like you*. The man made us pizza and he *bought* a boat.”

Will blushes. “Whatever.”

Bev gets up off her chair. “You’re hopeless,” she sighs walking to the mini fridge, “Is there anything to drink on this thing? My mouth feels ick.”

“I don’t…”

“No, just looks like two sandwiches, two...weird looking yogurts, and a bottle of wine.”

Will gets up off his chair and comes up to peer over her shoulder. There sitting inside the mini fridge is just what she said: two sandwiches in a container, two yogurt parfaits, and a bottle of wine. Two, not three. Had Hannibal known from the beginning that Leanne wouldn’t be eating lunch with them?

“Hey, you look weird. Are they important sandwiches?

He shakes his head and closes the door. “No, it’s nothing.”

“Doesn’t seem like nothing.”

“I don’t want to be on the boat anymore. You wanna go inside and finish the movie?”

She nods. “Thought you’d never ask. Not sure why you brought us out here before we finished anyway.”

He grabs her hand and smiles. “To keep you from telling my Mom’s boyfriend I have a crush on him.”

“Ohhhh.”

They walk back to the house laughing and go right to Will’s room where they finish not one but two movies. It’s not even two when Bev yawns. “Bored already?”

“It’s the lack of the sexual tension between you and—-“

He pinches her and she laughs.

“Bev, I swear…”

“Okay! Okay! I’ll stop,” she sighs standing, “But I’m gonna head home before I fall asleep on you and Dr. Boyfriend gets jealous.”

Will tosses one of his pillows at her back and she laughs.

“Stoooop!”

“Ok! Ok!”

“You want me to walk you home?”

“I’m fine, kind sir. I’ll text you when I get home.”

Will smiles. “Thanks for coming over.”

“Thanks for inviting me.”

“You’re welcome.”

She leaves and Will’s alone in his room again. He can’t help but think about the stuff Bev said. There was no way Hannibal liked him like that. Yeah he ‘s a little too nice and seems to want to be around Will more than Will’s mom. Maybe he does spoil Will a lot. But that didn’t mean he’s into Will.

That was just…not possible.

A text message ring brings him out of his thoughts and he picks up his phone.

Your boyfriend walked me home.

He’s not my boyfriend!

He said ‘it’s only proper to escort a guest home safely.’ I almost swooned and fainted in his arms but I didn’t think you’d be happy I got further with him than you.

Lol! Stoooop!

;P

He smiles as he sets his phone down and feels an odd warmth build in him again. Bev’s teases seem to echo in his head as the heat builds and he reaches into his pillowcase only to find it empty.

Will freezes.

“Shit.”

It seems the embarrassment he wanted to avoid this summer just might happen after all.

Chapter 12

Will doesn't come out of his bedroom for the next several hours.

The thought of running into Hannibal made him feel physically ill and he knew if they were face to face again his mortification might kill him. So he puts on his headphones, cranks up the TV, and tries not to think about the coming confrontation.

He soon gets lost in the movie and only comes out when someone taps his shoulder.

Hannibal is standing at the left of him, smiling wide, and Will takes down his earbuds slowly waiting for the words he's been dreading for hours.

"Dinner's ready, Will."

Will blinks. "Um…"

"If you're not yet hungry, I can keep a plate warm?"

He wants to ask if there's more, if Hannibal knows he's been secretly keeping his underwear and jerking off with them, but he only nods mutely.

"Is that a yes or…?"

Will shakes his head. 'No, I'm hungry. I...just have to stop this movie. I'll be right there."

"Of course," Hannibal says, "No rush. Though…," he frowns, "Your mother is awake again and she seems to have forgotten the incident on the boat. It's best not to bring it up."

"She forgot completely?"

"It seems so."

"Oh."

"It's best not to upset her unnecessarily."

What about me?

"Ok."

Hannibal smiles. "Thank you. I will make a place for you at dinner."

He only breathes normally again when Hannibal is gone and turns off the movie.

Why was Hannibal not saying anything about the underwear? Did he not know? Oh god, had Leanne been the one to find them?

Will hadn't even thought of her finding them, which seems like it might be an even worse idea. She'd obviously laugh while she made fun of Will if she had them, and end up embarrassing him in front of Hannibal.

He puts his hands over his face and groans.

This is gonna be a disaster.

Will gets up off the bed, lets out a long breath, and walks out into the hallway. The scent of whatever's cooking makes his mouth water as he gets closer to the dining room. He pauses at the door to listen.

"...starving! I feel like I could eat a whole cow!"

"I'm glad you're feeling better."

His mother's girlish laughter makes Will's skin crawl. "You miss me?"

"Of course."

His blinks and his vision is red for just a moment as he thinks about the silence on the other side of the door. He doesn't want to walk in on them kissing so he waits and closes his eyes tight.

"Mmm...I'll never get sick of that."

"I'm counting on it."

Leanne's laughing again as Will opens the door and they both look at him in different ways. Hannibal looks happy to see him, almost relieved, and Leanne looks a little upset that Will's arrival interrupted them.

The table is full of food, almost too much, but as he sits Will's hunger returns.

"Hope you're hungry, sweetie. Hanni here went overboard again."

She giggles and Will's teeth feel heavy in his mouth as he stares down at his plate. "Yeah."

"Are you alright, Will? You've been in your room all afternoon."

"I…"

"Oh stop, Hanni," Leanne laughs, "Let the boy have some space."

Will looks up in surprise.

"I was merely.."

"Teenagers want to be alone sometimes. I remember when I was young all I ever did was hide alone in my room when I wasn't away with friends. Sometimes it's...all you can do."

Her sudden frown makes Will feel oddly connected to her.

“I suppose.”

Will cuts into his food, feeling like this meal won’t be too bad after all. Obviously Leanne isn’t the one who found Hannibal’s underwear in his pillowcase. She would’ve made a huge deal of it already. He smiles as he takes a bite and the silence that follows is more comfortable than it usually is.

Until it’s not.

“What else did you do while I was sleeping again all day?” she asks, “You said Will had Beverly over. How did that go?”

“We had fun,” Will says, “Just hanging out.”

“Oh?” she says, wiggling her eyebrows.

“Not that kind of fun.”

“Beverly and Will are friends, Leanne. Nothing more.”

“You never know,” she whispers, “I had plenty of friends that became *more* when I was your age. Just being with someone and getting to know them can make…”

“They’re *not* going to be romantically involved. Beverly is attracted to females, not males.”

Will watches Leanne’s face fall. “Oh. How...how do you even know that?”

“I walked her home this afternoon and we spoke briefly.”

Leanne stares down at her food. “Well, it’s still...I’m glad you found someone to spend time with, Will. You shouldn’t be cooped up in this house all day.”

“Will can do whatever he likes, as you’ve said. This summer is about family, isn’t it?”

She looks at Hannibal. “Yes.”

“Then Will should be spending time with his family.”

Will watches an almost odd lifelessness come to her eyes as she nods. “Yeah,” she says, her voice shaking as she looks at Will, “Family.”

“Are you…”

“There is something else I wanted to discuss,” Hannibal interrupts, making Will look and see his skin is bluer than he’s ever seen.

Leanne doesn’t even seem to notice even as her eyes fall on Hannibal again.

“Are y---”

“I’ve been losing laundry,” Hannibal says, making Will freeze, “I’m not sure what could be the cause.”

His mother suddenly laughs in that same girlish squeal that grates on Will’s nerves.

“The sock goblin strikes again?”

“No,” Hannibal says softly, looking at Will, “I think perhaps someone is stealing my clothes.”

Will feels his face turn bright red.

“It’s only the three of us in the house, so....must be the sock goblins,” Leanne laughs, going back to her food.

“Perhaps. Will, I don’t think you’ve done laundry yet, have you?”

He looks away. “No.”

“Hmm.”

Will feels like he might burst into tears. Why was Hannibal doing this in front of his Mom? He could’ve just yelled at Will in private.

He takes another bite and the taste makes him almost sick. “I...I’m not hungry anymore.”

“Are you ok, honey? Your stomach feel funny? Cuz whatever I had….whew. You don’t want that.”

Will shakes his head. “Can I be excused?”

“Of course.”

He stands, pushing in his chair hard, and glares at Hannibal before he leaves. The immediate need to be outside makes him walk out the door, and Will goes to the edge of the lake where he puts his feet in.

Will sighs as the cool water makes him feel slightly better.

Hannibal’s need to bring up Will weirdly taking his clothes at dinner feels like a betrayal. He’d felt like they were friends, or something close to that, and while it would be humiliating to talk about at all in private Will wishes he had.

He moves his legs further into the water and almost feels like he might just jump in.

Will stands and walks closer until Hannibal’s voice stops him.

“Will?”

He doesn’t turn. “What?”

“I apologize for upsetting you. It was not my intention.”

Will scoffs. “Yeah, right.”

“No, I…”

He clenches his fists tight. “I get it, ok? You found out that I have a cr---”

Hannibal touches his shoulder. “I’m...unsure...at times of how to be...normal in situations I’ve never ran into before.”

Will pulls back roughly and turns to glare at him. “So you just thought humiliating me in front of my Mom was the way to go?”

“I apologize. I…did not think.”

“OBVIOUSLY!”

“I…went into your bedroom and spotted my…underthing…hanging out of your pillowcase. The reaction I had was one of…”

“Laughter?” Will hisses, stepping away, “I get it, ok? You think it’s funny. Just…don’t tell her. She hates me enough already.”

Hannibal frowns as he steps forward. “It was not laughter.”

He blinks back tears. “Then what was it? Because whatever you were just trying to do in there didn’t seem…”

Hannibal’s eyes almost seem to glow as he comes closer. Will feels his body grow warm and hates the weakness he feels but doesn’t run. He shivers when Hannibal reaches out to touch his cheek.

“I felt flattered,” Hannibal says softly, “I knew I shouldn’t but that is how I felt.”

Will feels the heat pool in his belly and his vision turns so red he can hardly see. “No, you didn’t.”

“Yes, Will. I did. I…”

He steps back. “Don’t. Just…don’t. I don’t know what’s worse. You making fun of me or you humoring me. I…just stop, ok? I’m not…I don’t…”

Hannibal sighs. “I don’t know how to make this right.”

“You can’t.”

“Will…please just…”

Will stares at the house for a moment before he turns to run into the water. It’s the weirdest thing he could possibly do but he feels immediate relief as he’s under and swimming away from the house.

He doesn't even want to ever go back.

He keeps swimming, lost in his upset, and hardly notices he hasn't come up for air until he's grabbed from behind.

Hannibal pulls him up, gasping for air, and they stare into each other's eyes.

"Will…"

"Don't," he says, voice thick, "Just…"

He whimpers when Hannibal runs a finger across his lips. "You're cold."

Will laughs through his tears. "I don't feel cold."

"Neither do I."

He doesn't try to get out of Hannibal's arms, and feels like he never wants to again. "This…"

"You're not ready," Hannibal says, "I want you to be ready."

"I don't…"

Hannibal touches his cheek and for a moment Will feels like his skin feels scaley. He's so confused.

"You look quite handsome in blue."

Will laughs, shaking his head. "I don't understand."

"I know, Mielasis. I know. That's why it's time to go inside."

"I don't want to."

"Neither do I, but…you're not ready."

Will can't see through his tears but he nods and Hannibal pulls them under again. They swim side by side to the house and say nothing as they come out of the water. Hannibal picks up his clothes and Will stares openly as he dresses.

Hannibal smiles. "It is flattering," he says, "Being admired by someone so young at my age."

"I'm not the only one who thinks you're…"

"No," Hannibal says softly, "But you're the only one who matters."

Will feels more confused than ever as he watches Hannibal walk toward the house.

Whatever just happened feels so important yet he's more confused than ever. He waits until Hannibal's inside to take off his shirt and as he rings it out the water hits his feet.

His oddly blue feet.

Will blinks as he lifts his foot and spreads his toes only to laugh. They look like webbed, like…a duck. He leans down only to hear Hannibal's voice.

"Will, come inside."

He looks up to see him standing on the porch. "I was just…my feet."

Will stares down at them again.

They look completely normal.

He blinks. "What?"

"Will."

Will sighs and heads toward the house. He knows what he just saw but he says nothing walking past Hannibal. They stare at each other for a moment before Will runs to his room.

He strips off his clothes, shaking, and climbs into bed.

What just happened?

Will closes his eyes and remembers Hannibal touching his lips. He sighs as heat fills him again and he begins to stroke himself. The memory changes into Hannibal kissing him, lifting Will into his arms and pulling them under the water.

He comes hard and almost feels the water on his skin.

"Hannibal…"

Will drifts off almost immediately and wakes the next morning feeling amazing. He lifts the blanket off and blinks when he sees he's clean.

He doesn't even remember wiping himself off.

Obviously he did.

He puts on his clothes and walks toward the dining room only to see Hannibal sitting on the couch. Hannibal's wearing nothing but a pair of purple speedos and his skin is just recently wet from the water.

Will licks his lips.

"Good morning."

"Good morning, Will. Sleep well?"

"Y…eah."

“Would you like to join me for a swim?”

Will licks his lips. “Yeah.”

Hannibal gets up off the couch and walks to the door.

“Wonderful. I’ll meet you in the water. Don’t be too long or you’ll be unable to find me.”

“I think…I could find you anywhere.”

Hannibal smiles. “Perhaps.”

Will feels a sudden ache from somewhere deep down inside him as Hannibal walks outside.

Whatever this feeling is he doesn’t want it to stop.

This summer is going to change his life.

He just wonders if it’s for the better…or the worse.

Chapter 13

Will walks back to his bedroom and changes into a pair of trunks. His last one, which means he's gonna have to do laundry soon if he's gonna keep swimming so much. He stares at himself in the mirror after taking off his shirt and wishes he had more muscles.

He sighs.

"Oh well."

Hannibal is nowhere to be found when he gets outside and Will feels warm knowing he's gonna have to find him in the water. He races into the lake and dives as soon as it's deep enough. The cool feeling makes his skin feel alive as he swims, and Will goes to where they swam before only to find it empty. He comes up to the surface and stares out around him. There's a few boats further across the way, barely able to see from here, and some bright colored bathing suits just as far.

But no Hannibal.

He goes under again and closes his eyes. *Where are you?*

Will feels a sharp pull toward the left and takes off swimming again. He doesn't quite understand why but he feels like Hannibal is this way. The pull tugs at something deep inside him as he swims and excitement builds just as he's tackled from behind. It's dark, but he knows it's not a predator and doesn't move to get out of the tight grip.

Hannibal is hot against his back and Will barely resists the urge to grind against him. Something tickles his neck that doesn't really feel like skin and he shudders at the touch. His skin feels hot, almost boiling, and Will turns to look only for Hannibal to rush to the surface.

He follows, gasping for air, and they stare at each other. "Found you."

Hannibal doesn't smile. "I seem to have found you first."

"Yeah," Will gasps, heart beating wildly in his chest, "I've...never been under that long before."

"How did it feel?"

Will blinks back water from his eyes. "I think I could've stayed under longer."

Hannibal touches his cheek. "How much longer?"

Forever , he wants to say, and feels the word from deep within him somewhere. But instead he says, "I don't know."

"Will…"

"Last night…"

Hannibal swims away from him just enough for Will's chest to tighten. "...was a mistake."

"What?"

"I was not quite myself last night, Will, and I don't think you were either."

The rejection is like ice in Will's veins. "No, you're...the things you were saying…"

“I want to be close to you, Will,” Hannibal says, looking away, “But I think it’s gotten a bit too inappropriate.”

Will scoffs as tears sting his eyes. “You’re the one who keeps....you….what? You can’t tell me the last few days haven’t...even Bev thinks…”

Hannibal sighs. “Will…”

“No,” Will hisses, his teeth heavy in his mouth, “You’ve been acting *inappropriate* even before we met, Doctor Lecter. Don’t push this off on me. I thought Bev was just seeing things but now...what even is this? You brought me out here and suddenly it’s stepson and stepdad time? You grabbed me and…”

“Your mother…”

“Means *nothing* to you,” Will growls, shaking, “Even she knows it, doesn’t she? You brought me here, Doctor Lecter, not her. Why have you been so…”

Will can barely see through his tears and the sudden red hue of his vision.

“I should not have acted or spoken to you the way I did last night. I regret that I…may have made you...”

He lets out a sob and dives under the water, swimming as far as he possibly can. The ache in his chest only gets worse as he goes and by the time Will surfaces he has no idea where he is.

The houses around him aren’t familiar and he’s ready to turn around when he hears the sound of music playing. Will swims further out and spots a group of teenagers laughing together in the water.

Will isn't usually eager to talk to strangers but the prospect of returning to the cabin is the worst thing he can think of right now. He swims closer, knowing he'll soon look like some sort of creep, and soon enough a girl with blonde hair swimming by a dock looks his way.

"Hey!"

The three people with her: two guys and a girl, don't seem overly thrilled with Will's arrival but he comes closer still.

"Hey."

"You new around here?" Blond girl asks, "I don't remember seeing you before. What's your name?"

"Yeah, pretty new. Wil."

"Well, *Will* , I'm Molly. This is Brian, Abby, and Jimmy."

The other three wave and the girl, Abby blushes a little. "Hi."

"I'm having a party tomorrow night," Molly says, "Same spot, if you want to come by. Lots of other people will be here."

Will feels his chest tighten. "Um, yeah sure. "

"Great, you wanna hang out a little or…"

A loud splash makes them all turn in time to see what looks like a blue fin crash down and go underwater. "Oh my god, what was that? A dolphin?" Brian says, sounding scared.

“Dolphins don’t have tails like that,” Jimmy mumbles, “It was probably just a big fish or something.”

Will stares at the spot off in the distance where the fish went under and feels cold.

“It wasn’t a fish,” he whispers.

Jimmy laughs. “Then what was it? A mermaid?”

“I…”

“Shit, how long have you been in the water, man? Your skin is turning blue.”

He backs away. “I...I think I better go home. I’ll see you guys tomorrow.”

Molly frowns. “You sure?”

“Yeah,” he says, voice shaking, “I gotta get home.”

“See you tomor---”

Will dives under and swims away, shaking at the memory of just a weird looking fin. The cold feeling lessens the further he gets from Molly and her friends. He resurfaces still unsure of where the cabin is but takes a few deep breaths.

What was that?

He stares out across the lake and shivers.

Where are you?

Will doesn't know who he's thinking about when he feels that same pull again. He goes under the water and follows the feeling, lost in it, until something tickles his leg. Will turns in time to see something blue rush past him.

His whole body is suddenly on fire as he goes after it.

The need seems only to build the further he goes, and he catches a glimpse of a familiar fin just as he remembers he needs to breathe.

Doesn't he?

He resists the urge to go to the surface and stays under following the blue until he sees what looks like a small hole just big enough for him in the rock below. Will sees the blue streak rush so fast as it enters and he hesitates.

Whatever it is he knows it doesn't want to hurt him.

But why was it luring him here?

Will suddenly feels like he can't breathe and swims up fast to the surface, coughing and shivering as the air hits his skin. His body aches to go back under and go into the hole. He knows nothing bad will happen there, feels it, but still he blinks back tears.

What was wrong with him? How did he stay underwater so long?

He lifts his hand up and lets out a laugh as tears fall down his face.

His fingers look even darker blue than before and he can clearly see the webbing between them.

“This is a dream,” he whispers, shaking his head, ‘This…”

Will’s vision blurs as he looks at his hand, shaking as he takes it in. He puts the hand on his face and feels the cool touch like an old friend. He lets out a sob, vision reddening, and whimpers as a dizziness takes over.

“This is a dream, it’s a dream, it’s---”

He doesn’t remember what happens after that, but he wakes up coughing water outside the cabin with Hannibal staring down at him in concern. Leanne stands far off but stares at them both not saying a word.

“Thank goodness,” Hannibal whispers, touching his forehead, “I thought I’d lost you.”

“How did I get here?”

“I found you outside in the grass just now and performed CPR. You swallowed a lot of water.”

He moves to sit up and Hannibal holds him down. “Try not to move.”

“Sweetie, you really need to be more careful. You’re old enough to know better,” Leanne scolds.

“Leanne, the boy just nearly drowned. He obviously had no control over it.”

“But he---”

“Go inside, Leanne.”

“He’s my son! I don’t want to go inside! I…”

Hannibal turns to look at her and his voice sounds like a growl. “Now.”

Will watches her go and stares up at the sky. It’s getting darker already. How long was he gone?

“I apologize for that.”

“And everything else?” Will whispers, not looking at him

“Will, about what happened earlier…”

He glares at Hannibal. “You made it pretty clear already, I don’t need to talk about this again. Can I move now?”

“Just a bit longer, please,” Hannibal says softly, taking his hand, “I...oh.”

“What?”

He turns Will’s hand and Will feels warm when he sees several scratches on his arm.

“You’ve been scratched,” Hannibal says, “Quite thoroughly.”

Will pulls his hand back and sits up. “I’m fine.”

“Were you attacked?”

“No.”

He stares at the scratches and almost smiles knowing who saved him.

“I have antibiotics inside.”

“I can put it on myself.”

“Yes, I...suppose you can.”

Will glares at him. “Are we done?”

“Yes.”

He gets up, aching all over, and stands on shaky legs. The memory of webbed toes doesn’t frighten him as he stares at his regular ones.

Will moves to look at his hand and remembers the webbing on them too.

There's something happening to him, really happening, and he can't talk to anyone about it.

"I'm glad you're alright," Hannibal says softly, making Will blink back tears.

"You didn't come after me."

"I thought it best to let you have time alone."

Will glares at him and his teeth feel heavy as he almost growls. "Obviously not, *Doctor* ."

"Will…"

He runs away from him into the house and doesn't stop until he's behind the bathroom door. Will peels off his wet trunks and turns on the water, not caring if it's cold, and puts his hands on the tile wall as tears fall down his face.

Will closes his eyes and remembers the blue fin. He feels a sudden calm go over him as he touches the scratches on his arms. He wants to go back into the water again, needs to, but the fear makes him let out a sob.

What do you want from me?

Why does it feel like I want the same thing from you?

He digs his hands into the scratches and the heat returns. Will feels his cock get harder and starts to stroke, covering his mouth as he keeps on touching the scratches. He bites his tongue and it hurts so much he groans but doesn't stop.

Will can almost feel someone touching him as he continues, and a scent hits that makes his knees weak but he doesn't stop. He needs to come, wants to feel it, and when a phantom claw seems to dig into his neck he groans spilling into his hand. Will hears the rustle of the shower curtain and turns in time to see it move. He opens the curtain and looks out only to see no one.

He shivers.

This weird shit that was happening to him must be messing with his head more than he thought.

Will finishes his shower, calmer than before, and wraps a towel around his waist. He walks out into the hall and moves to head back to his room just as he hears a moan. He tenses up as he hears a grunt.

He knows he shouldn't.

Hannibal's made it perfectly clear that any "inappropriate" actions he made regarding Will weren't gonna happen again. But still something makes Will head down the hall dripping water in his wake. He sees their door open just enough to peek inside, and his lip curls as takes in what's happening.

Leanne is on her hands and knees as Hannibal fucks her, and Will can't even see her face. He wonders if that's why Hannibal has her that way at all. A deep growl comes out of him as he fucks her hard, hands tight to her hips, and even though he can't see Will knows his eyes are closed.

He feels his body turn cold and his lip curl as he watches them.

Leanne cries out and moves to turn but Hannibal pushes her head down. Will smiles, teeth heavy in his mouth, and the triumph in knowing she still means nothing is what makes him let out a noise. Hannibal turns and Will stares at his red eyes.

Coward.

He turns away and walks back down the hall feeling better than he has in days. He puts on a pair of shorts and a tank top before grabbing his phone.

You wanna go with me to a party tomorrow?

A party? How did you get invited to a party?

I met this girl and her friends. Her name was Molly. You wanna go or not?

You got invited to a Molly Foster, party? Wow, Graham. Only a couple of days in and you're snagging invites to posh parties.

Posh? They looked normal to me.

Just wait. I'll go with you, if only to be sure the rich kids don't turn you into one of them.

Will smiles as he sits on his bed. **No one is gonna turn me into anything I don't want to be.**

Not even your stepdad to be?

Will frowns. **Not even him. He's not important anymore.**

Uh oh. I sense a story.

I'll tell you tomorrow.

I can't wait.

He sets down his phone and walks to the window. The lake seems to almost glow as the sun sets and he aches to go back in the water.

The memory of a blue fin makes him touch the scratch marks on his arms again.

If he can just get past the fear, he can find out what this all means.

There's a knock at his door and Will doesn't turn around. "Yeah?"

"May I come in?"

"No."

"Dinner will be done within the hour."

"Fine."

Will puts his hand on the window and sighs as he hears Hannibal's footsteps go away from his door. He closes his eyes and wishes he could remember whatever has that blue fin carrying him home.

"I'll remember," he whispers, "I will."

His feelings for Hannibal feel like a distant memory as he struggles to force the memory back.

This summer was already a mess of emotions and fears but this? This felt much more important.

This felt like everything Will didn’t know he always wanted.

And even if it took all summer....he was gonna get it.

Chapter 14

Will stays in his bedroom till well past midnight.

The peanut butter helps him get through missing dinner but eventually he needs more so he quietly walks down the hall. He follows the lingering scent of whatever Hannibal cooked hours before and ends up in the kitchen.

He finds it easy to see in the dark and opens the fridge only to tense up at what's inside.

A container sits on the top shelf with a note.

In case you change your mind.

-H

Will's chest aches when he sees a peanut butter jelly sandwich inside and smells the strawberry jelly immediately.

"Fuck."

He goes to throw the whole sandwich in the trash and stops just before flipping the container over. The scent of strawberry tempts him into taking the whole sandwich out and biting into it. It tastes so good he finishes fast and washes the container leaving it to dry in the sink.

Will drinks two bottles of water before he leaves the kitchen and heads back toward his room. He lays down and touches the scratches on his arms again. His eyes get heavy as he remembers the water, and can almost feel arms around him.

He wakes up feeling like he didn't get much sleep at all.

There's a sadness that seems to fill him as he dresses, and when he goes down toward the dining room Will is almost in tears.

His mom is awake again and the only one at the table, looking a little pale but otherwise ok. Will couldn't help but remember the last time he'd seen her and sits at the table without saying a word. She stares at him with an almost venomous glare that she quickly hides with fake concern when Hannibal enters the dining room carrying a covered tray.

"Are you ok, baby?"

Will could almost laugh if he didn't feel like crying. "I'm just tired."

"We missed you at dinner," Hannibal says, and despite how angry Will is at his rejection, he believes him.

"I wasn't hungry."

“Well I hope you’re hungry now, cuz whatever Hanni made smells delish.”

“I thought I’d try something different,” Hannibal says, taking the cover off the tray.

There are only two things on the platter in front of him: One is what looks like a tiny pitcher filled with syrup and the other is a stack of waffles so big Will’s mouth waters.

“Beef waffles and brown sugar butter syrup.”

“Waffles?” Leanne sighs, “Hannibal, you know I’m trying to cut down on carbs.”

Hannibal sets the plate on the table along with the syrup. “That didn’t stop you from eating several extra biscuits last night with dinner, Leanne, now did it?”

She gasps and Will can’t help but smile as he takes three waffles from the stack. He pours syrup over them and grabs one with his bare hands biting down.

Leanne looks pissed and Will’s bad mood seems to have gone away completely.

“Really good, Hannibal,” he says with his mouthful looking at Hannibal fully, “Best thing I’ve had in my mouth since I got here.”

Hannibal skin looks blue as he smiles back. “Thank you, Will.”

A loud clank makes them both look at Leanne who seems to have eaten a large chunk out of one waffle before letting her fork hit the plate. “So yummy, Hanni,” she all but moans, “I mean, all your food is to *die* for but this...is really great.”

“Thank you, Leanne.”

Will eats mostly while watching his mother after her obvious attempts at flattery. She seems almost desperate in her attempts at a conversation with Hannibal, who answers in kind but even Will can see he’s bored. Why Hannibal refuses to acknowledge what’s between them yet forces himself to deal with Leanne he doesn’t think he’ll ever understand.

“...and I told Mavis that…”

“I got invited to a party tonight.”

Leanne’s bright smile isn’t fake this time. “Oh? That’s great! Whose party are you…?

“She said her name was Molly,” he says, smiling even as Hannibal looks ready to kill someone, “I’m taking Bev. Not sure how late it’ll be.”

Hannibal’s eyes look almost glowing; they're so red as he stares at Will. “You don’t even know this girl’s last name?”

“Who cares, right?” His Mom laughs, “I say have fun!”

Will takes another bite of his food. “Bev says her last name is Foster.”

“Ohhh,” Leanne gasps, “The Fosters are SUPER rich! If you’re looking for a girl, sweetheart, that one is definitely the one you want!”

Hannibal stands up abruptly and leaves the table with his plate filled with only half eaten food. Will feels an odd sense of satisfaction watching him walk away.

He barely pays attention to his Mom’s excited ramblings as he finishes breakfast and Hannibal doesn’t come out of the kitchen the whole time. Will clears his plate and goes to walk toward the kitchen when Leanne stops him.

“I’ll take that, sweetie,” she says, winking at him, “You go see Beverly and find out all about this party.”

Will smiles. “Thanks.”

He pretends to go for the door but turns to watch her enter the kitchen. There’s little noise and he braces himself for the sudden moans.

But there’s none.

“Cmon, Hanni...don’t you….”

A loud crash comes and suddenly the kitchen door swings open. Hannibal stops to stare at Will and he feels his chest ache.

He blinks back tears before suddenly rushing out the door.

The satisfaction of knowing Hannibal wasn’t banging his Mom seems tainted by the way he’d looked at Will. No one’s ever looked at Will that way before, and as he runs down the path to Bev’s he tries to remind himself that Hannibal’s been jerking him around since he got here. He shouldn’t feel sorry for him.

Yet all he wants to do is turn back.

Will sniffles and wipes his eyes before pulling out his phone.

You awake?

Yeah, Mom decided we needed to see the sunrise ‘as a family’ today so I’m half zombie but am very awake. Why?

I’m almost at your house.

I’ll meet you.

Will touches the scratches on his arms as he keeps waking and feels better the more he does. He’s not gonna even think about why that might be.

Bev meets him outside just a few steps from her driveway.

“Oh shit, you look rough.”

He laughs. “Good morning to you too.”

Bev frowns. “Trouble in hot ‘not yet stepdad’ paradise?”

Will’s lip trembles as he nods. “Something like that, yeah.”

She grabs his hand and pulls Will to the porch steps. “Sit.”

“I’m not—”

“My parents are out in the backyard making out or something you’re fine.”

He sighs and sits down. She grabs his hands and squeezes. “Tell me.”

“Hannibal’s an asshole.”

“No, he’s really not but go on.”

“The other night we swam together again and he said all these things but...took them back the next day. I *know* there’s something, I...I feel it. He’s apparently too much of a coward to—”

Bev sighs. “Ok, you know I really like you. Right?”

“Yeah?”

“This whole *thing*?” she says, “It’s...I know you’re a big mess of emotions right now but...it’s not exactly *ideal* for Hannibal. If there is something, and I’ve been around you guys so I know there is, he’s probably just as messed up as you are over it. He’s the adult here, Will. He...he knows it’s...frowned upon. Maybe he’s...trying to wait till you’re ready.”

Will feels tears falling down his face. “I feel ready *now*.”

Bev pulls him into a hug. “I know.”

He buries his face into her neck and sighs. “I’m sorry I’m...getting you into all this.”

She pulls back and smiles. “Are you kidding? This is the most excitement I’ve had all year.”

He laughs and wipes the tears from his cheeks. “Glad I’m good for something.”

“Damn straight.”

They both suddenly start laughing way too much and he feels a million times better by the time Bev’s mom comes outside.

“I thought I heard you talking to someone! Hello, Will how…oh honey have you been crying?”

He blushes.

“Mom, you can’t just ask someone if they’ve been crying!”

“But…”

“Will’s—”

“Yeah,” he sighs, “But I’m ok now. Thank you.”

She frowns. “If you ever need anything you’re always welcome to stop by.”

Will smiles. “Thanks.”

Bev sighs loudly and stands grabbing his hand. “Let’s go inside before she starts spouting off Dr. Phil stuff.”

“Dr. Phil is a wonderful man!”

Will’s laughing as Bev drags him past her. “He’s not even a real doctor, Mom!”

They go upstairs and Bev sits him on her bed.

“Sorry.”

“No, it’s fine. Your Mom’s nice.”

“Sometimes.”

“Better than mine.”

She sits down next to him in awkward silence for a minute.

“Sooo…Molly Foster, huh? How’d that happen?”

Will shrugs. “I swam away from Hannibal and ended up running into her with some people. She invited me.”

“Molly Foster parties are…said to be…intense. You sure you’re up for that?”

He nods. “More than I’m up for anything. I *need* this, Bev. But I don’t really want to go alone. If you’re not into it that’s fine, I will, but—”

She puts her head on his shoulder. “I’m not gonna have you go there alone, ok? You’re bound to hook up with some skeez to get back at your not-stepdad and regret it immediately. Not happening. I’m just saying if you wanna hang out here instead that’s fine too.”

“No, I wanna go.”

“Ok, then. You can help me choose what bathing suit to wear under my clothes.”

He laughs.

“I’m serious.”

Will squeezes her hand. “Ok.”

They spend the rest of the morning trying to pick out Bev’s perfect party outfit and end up settling on a green one piece bathing suit with black stripes plus a blue romper for quick changing.

Bev’s mom orders pizza for lunch. They eat a whole half cheese and half pepperoni while watching a few Friday the 13th movies.

“Man, teenagers in these movies are so stupid…and twenty seven.”

Will laughs. “You think you’d do better in a horror movie?”

“Oh I know if I was chased by a terrifying monster I’d do a million times better. Wouldn’t you?”

He thinks about it.

“I guess…it depends on the monster.”

Bev grins. “Oh, so it’s like that huh? Will Graham’s got a few secret things he likes?”

He blushes. “No, I was just kidding.”

She takes a bite of a piece of crust and smiles.

“Uh huh.”

“So…what time do you think we should go?”

“After dark,” she says, grabbing the remote, “You don’t go to parties like that till dark.”

“Oh.”

“I mean, we could go earlier but…like I said…”

He sighs. “I’ve never gone to a party like this so I’m glad I have you.”

She smiles. “You think I have? Nope. But I’ve gone past parties at her house.”

“Her parents?”

“Nope. They usually are gone all night. I heard that they came home early once and Molly flipped her shit so…no parents. Though we are telling my parents there’re gonna be there.”

“Ok.”

“And if you ditch me I’m never talking to you again.”

Will laughs. “I won’t, I promise.”

Dinner ends up being whatever pizza was left over from lunch and Will expertly lies to Bev’s parents about the adults that’ll be at the party. They don’t end up leaving till well past eight p.m. and his nerves begin even before they’ve cleared the driveway.

“You sure you’re up for this?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“If you say so.”

The Foster house is a little further than Will thought it would be but well within walking distance. He stops to stare at the near mansion, set apart from everything else.

“Wow.”

“Uh huh. C’mon.”

There’s a crazy amount of people now where Will saw Molly just yesterday. He feels overwhelmed even just watching them.

“Want a drink?”

“Yeah, sure.”

Bev goes over to the keg and gets them both beer. He’s never been a fan of beer but takes a sip anyway.

“I think there’s some sweet stuff over there I can get?”

“No, it’s—”

“Will! You came!”

He turns toward Molly who stares him up and down.

“Hey, I brought my friend Bev.”

“Oh sure, I know Bev.”

Bev fakes a smile. “Hey Molly. Nice place.”

“Thanks. You both should come swim. I’d love to…get wet with you,” she says, staring at Will.

“Uhhh…”

“We’ll be in soon. We’re just gonna go find a place to change.”

She all but drags Will up to the house and into the nearest room. “Ok, so…Molly wants to jump your bones.”

“I…”

“If you don’t want that, you gotta steer clear of her. She’s been known to talk anyone out of their clothes pretty easily.”

He blushes. “I’m…”

“Will, do you or do you not want to have sex tonight?”

Will lets out a long breath. “Maybe?”

Bev’s eyebrows go up. “Okay, so…let me put it this way…do you want to have sex with Molly Foster tonight?”

“No,” he says, “I don’t.”

“Then stick to me like glue.”

He nods. “Ok.”

“Now, take off your clothes cuz it’s time to go in the water.”

The sudden excitement that fills him knowing they’re headed into the lake makes Will all but rip off the clothes hiding his trunks. Bev whistles.

“Someone’s eager to get wet.”

He blushes.

They put their clothes together in the nearest closet and head outside. The noise from the others around them is like a dull buzz as Will rushes to the water. He feels warm when he goes under and pops up to grin at Bev who’s not even at the edge yet.

“Geez Will, excited much?”

He laughs. “C’mon!”

She laughs. “Gimme a second!”

Will waits for her to get in before he goes back under, and she follows. He knows she’s probably not as fast as he is so he slows down. He comes up for air before he needs it.

“Wow, look at you,” Bev says, her eyes wide, “Are you on the swim team or something?”

“Nope.”

“You should be.”

“Lookin’ good, Will.”

He frowns at Molly’s sudden appearance. “Thanks.”

“You wanna come see Daddy’s boat? It’s huuuge.”

Will looks at Bev. “Uhhh…”

“Actually I have this condition where I sometimes need someone to be with me when I…” Bev tries to lie but Molly interrupts.

“Oh I can get Abby to hang out with you. Abby c’mere!”

Bev and Will both turn to see the girl Will saw with Molly before swim over. He hears Bev whisper so softly he’s sure no one else does.

“Oh.”

He sees her cheeks turn pink as Abby swims over.

“Abby, you know Bev. Right?”

“Um…yeah I think we have Bio together,” she says, smiling shyly.

“Yeah, I…”

Will can practically feel Bev’s crush. He smiles at Bev. “Let’s go look at your boat, Molly. I’m sure Bev is in good hands.”

“Will…” Bev starts but he shakes his head.

“We won’t be long.”

She mouths ‘thank you’ and he nods letting Molly grab his hand. He’s not the type to be pushed into anything so he’ll be fine.

Really.

They go through the crowd and he finds himself eager to get in the water again already.

“How far is it?”

“Not far.”

There’s a boat house in the distance that’s far from everything else and the closer they get the weirder he feels. They walk inside and he whistles at the boat.

It’s much larger than the one Hannibal bought and really nice.

“Wow.”

“Daddy just got it from a friend,” she says, “And we had the new boat mechanic, Matt something, in town look it over. He was cheap but Daddy trusts him. Not sure why.”

Will climbs up on the boat without bothering to help her on. “It’s great. Hannibal’s got a smaller one but this…”

“Hannibal?”

“My mom’s boyfriend. We have a cabin that’s…”

“Oh, you mean Dr. Lecter?”

He turns. “You know him?”

“He’s my doctor,” she says, leaning against the boat’s edge, “He’s really nice, even if he’s a little weird.”

He laughs and stares at her pink bikini. “You look nice.”

She licks her lips. “How nice?”

Will’s teeth suddenly feel heavy in his mouth. “Um…”

Molly walks over to him and puts her hands on his shoulders. He can smell something sweet on her and feels warm.

“I like you, Will. Do you…”

All of a sudden the boat rocks so much Will falls backward.

“What the hell was that?” Molly says, “I swear, if that mechanic…”

The boat rocks again and Will rushes to the edge looking down. He watches a blue fin go under the water and almost jumps in after it.

“Do you see anything?”

“N…no, I…I think we should get off the boat.”

She sighs. “Fine. I’m gonna tell Daddy to ream that Matt out if this boat’s broken.”

Will climbs off the boat and holds his hand to help her off too. She smiles at him. “So…even if…”

A scream tears through the night and they both freeze as more follow.

“What’s…?”

Will runs toward the screams, heart beating wildly in his chest, and thinks only for Bev. He finds her out of the water holding Abby who’s in tears. “What’s going on?”

Bev shakes her head. “I…”

He sees a bunch of people together on the other side of the dock and rushes over pushing through the crowd.

What he sees when he gets to the front makes him freeze.

There’s a girl with blonde hair laying floating face down in the water. She’s not moving. And it looks like someone or something tore into her head so much it’s hanging off.

He sees red and closes his eyes.

Did the blue fin creature do this?

It had to be.

Will tries hard to calm down and opens his eyes again normally.

“Someone call 911!”

“OH MY GOD! BRITNEY!” Molly screams.

Will walks away from the water and looks out just in time to see a familiar fin go under.

And it’s not blue.

It’s green.

He feels suddenly ice cold.

There’s two of them?

Chapter 15

The police interview every single person at the party, and Will still feels weird even an hour after he saw the body get taken away. Bev's parents come offer him a ride but he declines.

"I'm gonna walk."

"Will…"

"I *need* to walk, Bev. Okay?"

"It's not quite the best idea, honey," Bev's mom says, frowning, "We can drive you, really, it's no problem."

He sighs, knowing there's no way they'll leave without him. "Fine."

"Did you call your mother, Will?"

Will lies. "Yeah, she's not feeling well."

"Hannibal…"

"He knows," he lies again, "It's fine."

The car ride is quiet, everyone still shocked, and when they come close to the house he can't take it anymore. "I can get out here."

"Will…"

He practically jumps out of the car and races toward the house hoping they leave but see they're waiting for him to go inside. The minute he's inside he realizes the house is a little too quiet for it only being around ten.

They must've gone to bed early then.

Will opens the door again and is happy to see Bev's parents left. He walks out to the lake, shaken still by what he's seen, but feels a need to be in the water again. The minute he's under Will feels something touch his leg, and whatever touched him is so fast it's a blur.

The feeling is warm though, not cold like he felt staring out at the green fin, and even though he's not as fast a swimmer he knows where the blue fin creature will be going. He knows this could be dangerous, but feels nothing but warmth as he goes back to the hole in the rock again. Will takes a deep breath and goes under the water to stare at the darkness within.

Will shouldn't, but he does anyway.

He needs this.

It’s narrow at first, just barely big enough for him, but quickly gets bigger until he comes up in a full cave. The rocks are luminescent, illuminating the cave, and as he swims further in Will feels warm just being inside.

“Hello?”

There’s no movement from below him as he stares around the cave, or even a ripple in the water.

The blue fin went inside.

Will knows it did.

“I’m...not afraid of you,” he whispers, lifting up his hand and suddenly seeing it webbed again, “I think...I might be…”

He gasps when he’s grabbed from behind. The skin feels scaley against his own but Will leans back in the embrace. “I...I…”

The creature presses its nose to the back of his neck and he shivers.

“I want to see you,” he sighs, “I…”

Will’s rushed to the rocks with sudden force and he grunts as he’s pressed against them. He feels his whole body heating up as the creature licks across his skin.

“I know you didn’t do that,” he whimpers, “I...there’s two of you?”

The creature growls and presses himself against Will harder.

Will’s whole body feels on fire and he can hardly breathe. “I…I don’t...fuck...I’m not…”

The creature digs his nails into Will’s hips and he cries out. “You’re...hurting me.”

All at once he’s free just in time to see the monster’s familiar fin go underwater again.

“Wait!”

Will tries to swim after it but he’s too slow, and he resurfaces in frustration.

“Damnitt.”

The further he swims away after the more tired Will feels and by the time he’s at the house he can barely keep his eyes open. He jumps back when out of nowhere both Hannibal and Leanne come running outside.

Leanne hugs Will to her chest. “Where have you been?!? We’ve been looking everywhere!”

He hates being this close to her and glares over his shoulder at Hannibal.

“I’m fine.”

“We saw it on the news. You didn’t have them call us? Oh my baby must’ve been so scared.”

Hannibal looks worried as he entangles Leanne from Will. “We’re glad to see you’re safe,” he says, looking him up and down, “You were swimming alone? What are those marks on your hips?”

Will blushes. “I caught some rocks,” he lies, “I...I know I shouldn’t have gone alone but I just...needed to clear my head.”

“I see.”

“I’m fine,” he repeats, as Hannibal puts a hand on his forehead, “Really I’m just tired.”

He stares into Will’s eyes. “Yes, I’m sure you are. Have you eaten?”

Will nods.

Hannibal lets his hand fall and moves to touch the marks on Will’s hips. “Do you need me to tend to those scratches? I can…”

“NO!” Will says, hugging himself, “I’m fine. Just really really tired.”

Hannibal frowns. “Alright then,” he says softly, stepping back, “Goodnight, Will.”

Leanne rushes up to him again and Will just grabs her shoulder for a quick squeeze.

“Goodnight.”

The fatigue only seems to get worse as he walks down the hallway, and he can barely keep his eyes open in the shower digging his hands into the new scratches. He doesn’t know why but it feels better knowing they’re there, and as he steps out of the shower he’s still touching the marks.

Will barely makes it to his bed when he falls asleep and doesn’t wake up until his shoulder is shaken by Hannibal as the sun stings his eyes. He stares up at him in confusion.

“Wh...huh?”

“Will, it’s past noon. Are you still not feeling well?”

He puts a hand on Will’s forehead and the warmth of his touch makes Will shiver. “No, I just...it’s twelve o’clock?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, still frowning, “This is the third time I’ve tried to rouse you.”

Will sits up and groans. His whole body aches when he tries to move.

“Will?”

“I feel weird.”

“Tell me what you mean by that. Are you in any pain?”

“Yeah,” he sighs, as Hannibal puts two fingers to his wrist, “I hurt.”

“All over?”

“Yeah.”

“Are you hungry?”

He shakes his head.

“Thirsty?”

Will licks his lips and suddenly his tongue is very dry. “Yeah.”

Hannibal runs a hand down his cheek. “I think perhaps you should stay in bed today.”

“No, I…”

“Any plans you have can wait. I’ll make you a light lunch but please stay in bed.”

Will whimpers as he tries to sit up again. “But...I…”

Hannibal sighs. “Please lay down, Will. I will return.”

He sighs and flops back down onto his bed. The aches feel less now but Will still has never been this tired. He feels himself start to drift and closes his eyes only to wake to Hannibal’s hand on his forehead.

“Mmm?”

“You’re still warm,” he says, frowning, “Are you still hurting?”

“It’s an ache,” he mumbles, “I...just feel sore.”

He hands Will a glass of water that Will grabs so fast he nearly spills it. The cool water going down his throat makes him nearly moan, and when he’s drunk the entire glass he feels slightly better.

“That was…are you still sore?”

Will sets the glass on his bedside table and nods, laying down again as the temporary reprieve starts to fade. “The water...helped...but...yeah.”

Hannibal peels back Will’s blanket slightly and stops not looking him in the eye. “May I see the scratches?”

Will feels a rush of warmth as he nods. He doesn’t remember putting on anything last night after his shower but he’s wearing boxers as Hannibal moves the blanket to his hips. Hannibal’s hand softly touches the marks and he bites back a moan.

“These don’t look like they were made by rocks.”

He blushes. “They were.”

Hannibal lifts his head up and stares at him.

“I wouldn’t judge you for your...personal...activities, Will. As long as you’re being safe,” he whispers, “This…”

Will covers himself again and turns away from him. “I’m not…”

He closes his eyes when Hannibal puts a hand on his shoulder.

“We all have...things...that we enjoy in the privacy of our own bed that others may deem strange. As I’ve said, I wouldn’t judge you, but I want to know you’re being safe.”

Will lets out a long breath but doesn’t look at him. “I am.”

“That’s good to hear.”

He turns to glare at Hannibal. “Is it?”

Hannibal’s skin looks bluer at Will’s question. “Will…”

He lays on his back and sighs. “What’s wrong with me?”

“I’m...not quite sure. This could very well just be psychosomatic fatigue brought on by a traumatic experience.”

“But…?”

Hannibal puts his hand on Will’s forehead again.

“I don’t think that’s what this is.”

Will puts his hand over Hannibal’s on his head. “I don’t...like...hospitals,” he says, “And I don’t really get sick.”

“But?”

“But I don’t like hospitals.”

Hannibal smiles. “I won’t take you to a hospital. I...was thinking rather we’d go to my office. It’s closed briefly for the next few months as I’ve...taken a leave of absence. No one would disturb us, it would just be you and I. I can do more tests there.”

Will’s whole body seems to perk up at the very idea.

“Won’t...I mean...Leanne…”

“Leanne is resting,” Hannibal says, taking his hand away as his eyes take on a slight red sheen, “Your ordeal last night had her oddly shaken. I’ve never seen her so upset.”

Will frowns. “Really?”

He nods. “She...was worried for you and yet refused to leave the house. I’m surprised she came out to you at all.”

“Weird.”

“Her fitful sleep last night made me give her something to rest this afternoon.”

“Oh.”

“You’re not against going to my office for a more...thorough...exam?”

Will looks down at his hands. “That’s fine.”

Hannibal frowns. “You’re not still upset with me?”

“I’m not...not...upset. I just want to know what’s wrong.”

“As do I,” Hannibal whispers, standing, “I will finish making lunch and return with it. You should eat before we leave. Please remain in bed.”

Will nods and watches him go feeling less sore but not better. He pulls down his blanket and touches the scratch marks again.

Did the blue creature infect him with something?

He shivers when he digs his hands into the scratches.

Will hums as he sees his skin start to turn blue but doesn’t stop, and he’s lost in the sensation just as a gasp of surprise pulls him out of it.

Hannibal is staring at him with almost entirely blue skin in the doorway. It’s a deep blue, almost familiar, and Will feels so warm he’s almost hot. “I...should have knocked. I apologize.”

He licks his suddenly dry lips. “I wasn’t doing anything weird.”

“You were humming,” Hannibal says, “And touching below your waist. I should not have assumed.”

Will blushes as he walks into the room all the way and puts a try over his legs. There’s a glass of water and bowl of obvious soup that he leans over to smell. “Fish soup?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says softly, “You’ve had it before?”

“No.”

“Fish soup was something my mother made when we were ill, I’ve not had the pleasure of it’s scent in a long time.”

Will frowns. “Did you have some?”

“No, I…”

“Go get some,” Will says, his chest tight, “You’re not sick but...it would make me feel better to share it with you.”

Hannibal’s blue skin, already beginning to fade, looks almost purple as he smiles.

“I will return.”

Will watches him go, hating how much he still wants to be around him, and takes a drink of water feeling slighter better though he still aches. He doesn’t eat until Hannibal returns, bowl in hand, and they both take their first bites looking into each other’s eyes.

He can almost feel Hannibal’s pain as he takes that first taste and resists the urge to touch him.

Hannibal doesn’t want “untoward” behavior between them, and Will hates how broad a meaning that has.

“It’s good,” he says, “A little salty but…”

He frowns at Will. “I followed the recipe by memory but perhaps…”

Will grabs his hand. “I was kidding! I...sorry. I’m not...good at things like this and…”

He’s suddenly hit with a wave of pain in his belly and almost doubles over crying out.

“Will!”

Hannibal moves the tray and rushes to touch his belly. “What is it? Tell me.”

“A shooting pain,” he groans, “I just...I’m sorry I…”

“Perhaps I should take you to a…”

Will grabs his arm. “No! I...your place,” he sighs, “I want it to be you.”

He frowns. “As you wish. Can you stand?”

Will blinks back tears. “I...I don’t know.”

He gasps when he’s pulled into Hannibal’s arms and carried out of the bedroom. The sharp pain hits again and he buries his face into Hannibal’s neck, breathing in as tears fall down his face.

“Fuck, it…”

“Shh…”

This irrational fear of hospitals might end up killing him, he knows that, but he clings to Hannibal’s neck as they walk toward the car. He feels better the longer he’s in Hannibal’s arms and the pain starts to lessen when he’s put into the passenger seat.

“Ok?”

Will nods.

They pull away from the house and Will feels a wave of exhaustion that has him sleep all the way until Hannibal’s touch makes him open his eyes.

“We’ve arrived.”

He looks out the window and sees they’re behind a building. “There’s…?”

“My practice doesn’t share space with anything else. No one will see your…lack of attire.”

He blushes. “They might think that nice Dr. Lecter is up to no good.”

“Heaven forbid,” Hannibal jokes, “Do you need my help again?”

Will shakes his head. “I think I’m ok.”

They both get out of the car almost at the same time and walk up to a backdoor that’s very soon unlocked. Hannibal’s office is bigger than Will expects, but still not huge, and Hannibal flips on the light to walk inside Will feels happier than he’s been in a while.

This is Hannibal’s place.

Yes, other people come here but it feels like Hannibal’s place.

“Has…Leanne been here?”

“She’s been outside and in the lobby but never in the exam area. I refused to become her doctor out of ethical concerns.”

Will looks at him. “But you want to be mine?”

Hannibal doesn’t look away. “Yes.”

He feels that familiar warmth fill him. “I’m feeling better.”

“That’s good to hear. Come, I’ll…take you to the exam room.”

Will doesn’t feel at all weird to be wearing his boxers while Hannibal’s fully dressed. He knows he should but it just doesn’t happen. The whole office is in dark grays and blues, which add to the making him feel better.

“You decorated the whole place, huh?”

“What makes you think that?”

“Just a guess.”

“A good one. I did all the decorating inside and out. Do you like it?”

“It’s…homey.”

“Thank you.”

They walk up to the door with a plaque that reads: EXAM ROOM and Will’s sudden easygoing feelings go away the minute they’re inside.

The exam table isn’t too big or small, blue of course, and when he walks up to touch it’s cold.

“Get on the table.”

Will bites back a noise as he jumps up and takes a minute before he meets Hannibal’s gaze.

“It’s cold in here.”

“I apologize,” Hannibal says, turning away to grab something shiny, “It does combat the heat does it not?”

“I guess.”

He comes back to Will with a whole group of metal objects and Will wiggles in his seat seeing them.

“What’re those?”

“I’m going to check your mouth, your nose, ears, and possibly…others. At anytime you become discomfited tell me and I will stop.”

Will nods. “Oh…kay.”

“Are you uncomfortable now, Will?”

Will blushes. “No.”

“Then please look up at me.”

He lifts his head up and Hannibal holds up a tongue depressor. “Open your mouth.”

Will opens his mouth and feels a wave of heat fill him as Hannibal stares into his mouth. “You have beautiful teeth,” he praises, “I’m willing to bet you’ve had very little dental work.”

He blushes.

It’s true.

His dad always jokes that Will's the cheapest kid there is since he's never really had any medical problems. While most kids had cavity after cavity Will had none and while he did get a few scrapes it was never anything life threatening.

Dad said Will knew they'd be short on cash so he made sure not to be an idiot.

"No discoloration."

Hannibal takes the tongue depressor out and lifts up a flashlight that he shines into Will's eyes. "Very good."

Will wiggles again and feels another kind of ache.

"What does this haveta do with my stomach?"

He lets the light down. "I want to be thorough."

Will licks his lips. "But…"

"Have you been to doctors often, Will?"

"No."

"How do you know what's the right way to give an examination?"

"I just—"

"Are you feeling better?"

Will blinks. "Um, yeah."

"Then I must be doing something right."

He smiles. "You got me there."

Hannibal smiles back. "Shall we continue?"

"Ok."

Will doesn't pay attention to how long the exam goes on, but by the end he feels a million times better. He watches Hannibal make him a patient file after and stick it in a drawer at his desk.

The private office is just as Hannibal-like as the rest of the place. Will is pleasantly surprised to see a digital aquarium against the wall and watches while Hannibal finds him a pair of sweatpants to wear that end up being two sizes too big. They leave both laughing at how ridiculous he looks and stop off for strawberry peanut butter sundaes on the ride home.

Will feels so happy he can hardly stand it by the time they're on the road, and he's struck by the sound of Hannibal humming as he drives.

The song is one he doesn't know, but feels like he does, and it makes his heart beat faster.

"What's that song?"

Hannibal pauses. "Pardon?"

"You were humming just now."

"I…wasn't aware. I apologize."

"No, it's…pretty. What is it?"

"An old family song," he says, his voice thick.

"Oh."

Hannibal stares at him.

"Perhaps someday it'll teach it to you."

"We've got time."

"Today is not the day for that song."

Will feels his stomach hurt. "Oh."

Hannibal touches his arm. "But someday it will be."

He stares at his arm as Hannibal lets go of it, blushing as he looks out the window. His arm feels warm and he looks down.

There's no blue bruise.

Will frowns but doesn't say anything.

They pull up to the house at dusk, which means it's way later than Will thought. He steps out of the car and waits for Hannibal before they head for the house. He's shocked when Leanne all but barrels into Hannibal hitting his chest

"DO YOU JUST NOT AMSWER THE GODDAMN PHONE? WHERE WERE YOU? I WAS TERRIFIED!"

Hannibal grabs her arms. "Calm down, Leanne! I left a detailed…"

"YOU WERE GONE FOR HOURS! I…I…."

She bursts into tears and he wraps his arms around her while sharing a frown with Will.

Will walks away from them into the house and goes right to his room. He pulls his phone off the charger only to see tons of texts from Bev.

Did you see the news?

I'm freaking out.

Are your parents making you stay home too? Thank god I'm used to it.

*Molly was on four news stations. *rolls eyes**

I hope you're ok.

Yeah, I wasn't feeling good but I'm better now.

Good. You wanna hang out tomorrow?

Will walks over to the window just in time to see Hannibal kiss his mother. Hus chest hurts as he looks away.

Yeah.

See you in the AM.

Will sighs as he lays down and closes his eyes. The ache is back, less now, but he's not sure it'll ever go away.

He rolls onto his side and feels the scratches on his arms. The ache fades as he feels them and he frowns.

What's *really* wrong with him?

He's not sure he'll ever find out.

It's gonna be a long summer.

Chapter 16

The sky is still dark when Will gets up the next morning.

He looks at his phone and sees it's only slightly past five a.m., but still gets up anyway. Will realizes it's his last clean pair of swim trunks when he pulls them on. He'd have to do his laundry soon.

The house is nice and quiet, he prefers it this way, and he heads outside to the lake not bothering to eat breakfast.

The cool of the water feels like home when he goes under, and though it should be solid darkness in front of him he sees everything clearly. He swims, gliding through the water, and feels an itch at his back that makes him stop to scratch.

There's something there.

He resurfaces, heart beating wildly in his chest, and touches it.

It's long with jagged edges and scaly.

Like a fin.

Will can hardly breathe as he touches, and he lets out a maniacal laugh.

"Oh my god."

He's near the top when something zooms past him.

Something green.

Will freezes, suddenly ice cold, and his lip curls.

"No," he hisses, diving under.

The house isn't far, he can feel it, but the green creature grabs for his arm but Will strikes out hissing. He hears the monster roar as he swims, tears in his eyes, and is panting when he rushes out of the water.

He stares out at the lake and sees the green fin disappear.

"No."

Whoever that is, he doesn't want anything to do with them.

Will goes back to the house to shower, feeling dirty, and scrubs at his arms shaking from what just happened. He's in for almost too long but feels slightly better when he steps out heading for the door.

Hannibal stands on the other side.

“Are you ok, Will? You were in there for some time.”

His bottom lip curls as he nods turning away to head for his room.

“Will, what’s—”

He slams the door in Hannibal’s face and locks it.

The urge to open the door again is almost too much but he resists, quickly dressing in yesterday’s shorts and putting on a blue tank top.

Will texts Bev.

Can I come now?

Sure. Everything ok?

He hesitates.

No.

I’ll meet you halfway.

Will is in tears when he rushes out of his bedroom and he doesn’t stop, not even when Hannibal calls out as he leaves.

He needs to be away from the house, away from everything, and he’s more than halfway to Bev’s when he sees her headed for him.

“Shit, you really aren’t ok.”

“I...can we just...walk?”

“Yeah, sure.”

They walk in silence on the trail, sounds of wildlife around them, and pass by a few houses with no one outside. Will can feel the chill of the lake close by and refuses to look out at the water.

“Is it Britney? Are you…”

Will shakes his head. “I...no...I went swimming this morning and...someone tried to attack me.”

Bev grabs his arm and he flinches but doesn’t push her away. “What!?!? Omg, Will! Are you ok?”

“Yeah, I...the scratches aren’t…”

She frowns. “What scratches?”

He blinks and stares down at his arms. “You can’t see them?”

Bev looks at him oddly. “Um...no?”

Will rubs his hands across the scratches as he tries to understand. Why can Hannibal see the scratches but not Bev?

“Nevermind,” he mumbles, “It...it was just scary that’s all.”

Bev takes his hands. “Did you see who it was?”

He shakes his head. “They swam away before I could. I just...it freaked me out.”

“I’m sure,” she says, looking him up and down before her eyes settle on his arms, “Ohhh I see scratches now. I...that’s weird that I...huh. How’d you get them?”

Will blinks. “You see them now?”

“Yeah, it’s not too bad but…”

He looks down. The scratches are pretty bad, even though they’re healing slowly.

“Rocks,” he lies, “Is there somewhere we can sit?”

Bev let’s go of his left hand and squeezes his right. “There’s a spot by the lake where…”

“No! I...away from the lake.”

She frowns. “There’s a park I think? It’s a little bit away but…”

“I have my car.”

“Nah, we can walk. Most of these houses are close together around here other than yours. I think Dr. Lecter’s is the only one with privacy.”

Will gestures out in front of them. “Lead the way.”

Bev smiles. “Ready for an adventure?”

He laughs. “Always.”

The walk to the park takes longer than Will expects, and the sun beats down hotter as they go. He feels an urge to go to the water but resists, growing more anxious, and by the time they get there he’s a little dizzy.

“Will?”

He sits on the nearest bench. “Sorry, I’m a little bit dizzy.”

Bev frowns as she sits next to him. “You sure that asshole didn’t do anything to you?”

Will shakes his head. “I’m fine.”

There’s a small jungle gym on a pile of wood chips and two swings but no one else is there.

“Not a popular place?”

“Most kids are swimming or playing video games in AC during the summer. We’ve been coming here since I was little so….”

“You live in…?”

“About two hours away,” she sighs, “A lot of the kids I go to school with hang around here in the summer too. Not that I hang out with them.”

Will wipes sweat from his brow. “Speaking of….how did it go with Abby?”

Bev blushes. “We exchanged numbers. We’ve been texting about the party and...maybe other stuff.”

He grins. “At least one of us might make a love connection this summer.”

She frowns. “Will…”

Will looks away. “Don’t.”

Bev puts her hand over his on the bench. “Mayyybbbbee...if you want we can just go back to my place and have a day in air conditioning watching bad movies.”

He smiles. “Can we just sit a little longer?”

“I dunno, Graham….you’re looking a little….”

Will feels a familiar ache in his belly and winces. “I’m fine.”

“Will, I'm gonna call my Dad for a ride. I know you’re not ok” she says, frowning, “And before you say no it’s him or I call your doctor not boyfriend.”

He sighs. “Ok.”

Bev presses the phone to her ear and sighs. “Shitty reception. I’m gonna go closer to the tower. Don’t move.”

Will looks out at the park again, his eyes half closed, and spots a water fountain. He stands and walks over, suddenly thirsty as hell. The water that comes out is lukewarm but it’s something, and soon he’s slurping down water like he’s lost on a deserted island.

He feels infinitely better once he’s done, and spots Bev staring at him oddly just a few steps away.

“You sure you’re not still sick?”

“I’m fine.”

Will turns to splash water over his face and sighs. “Just...abnormally thirsty?”

He smiles back at her. “It’s eighty degreees out, Bev.”

“I know, but…”

“Did you talk to your Dad?”

She hesitates.

“What?”

“The car wouldn’t start last night so he called over a mechanic that’s been fixing stuff all over the neighborhood. The guy said he’d come pick us up, since he’s gonna be there all afternoon.”

He sighs. “So we have to get in the car with a stranger?”

“He’s not a *stranger,* not really. Everyone in town’s been talking about him this week. He’s staying for the summer just like everyone else. Mom says he’s ‘very handsome for someone so young’ and I was thinking…”

Will feels his chest tighten as he walks back to the bench. “No.”

She hugs his side. “I mean, you’ve been having all this trouble with Dr. Lecter and…”

“He might not even be into guys.”

“Oh he definitely is into just about everybody.”

“I thought he just got here this week?” Will mumbles, “How can…”

“He’s getting around, I guess,” she laughs, “His name’s Matt, I think?”

Will frowns. “Molly mentioned a mechanic named Matt at the party.”

“See? Everyone already knows him.”

“That doesn’t mean…”

Someone beeps behind them and they both turn to see a sea green pickup pulled over on the side of the road. Will suddenly felt a strange cold settle over him.

“That’s gotta be him, c’mon.”

Bev pulls him up from the bench and Will feels really weird as they get closer. She leans down to smile in the window. “Hey, are…”

“You’re Bev and Will, yeah?” a voice asks.

Will doesn’t understand why but he feels like he shouldn’t get in the car. “Bev…”

“That’s us!” she says, opening the door.

He watches her climb in the back and grits his teeth before he climbs in the front closing the door. “Heard you weren’t feelin’ too good, huh? It gets hot out there. You thirsty? I can stop for a drink.”

“Will just practically guzzled the water fountain, he’s ok. Right, Will?”

Matt smiles. “Did he? That’s good.”

Will turns and takes in the man driving. Matt is older than him, by how much Will’s not sure, and better looking than he thought he’d be. He also has the greenest eyes Will’s ever seen. The fear about him earlier still lingers.

“I…”

“He might still be thirsty though. Are you *thirsty*, Will?” Bev teases, squeezing his shoulder.

“I’m *fine.*”

Matt eyes Will up and down before he winks. “I’ll get you back to the Katz house as fast as I can go without getting pulled over.”

Bev laughs. “Get your seatbelt on Will, I think we’re about to go on a wild ride.”

“Nah,” Matt says, “Just a fun one.”

Will looks anywhere but at their driver as they pull away from the curb. He grips the door with one hand and touches his scratches with the other to calm down.

“So, Matt, where are you from?”

“What makes you think I’m not from around here?”

“Are you?”

“Nah, I’m from...all over really but...I come around every now and then when things get interesting.”

“Well, I’m sure…”

They were coming up on Bev’s house and Will couldn’t wait to get out of the car. He pulls out his phone and sees he’s got several texts from Hannibal. He hardly hears anything the two of them were saying as he presses the notification.

If you’re not coming home for dinner please let me know.

I hope you're alright. You left quite abruptly this morning.

I'm fine.

"Will?"

Will looks up and sees they're parked. He blushes and unbuckles.

"Bad news?" Matt asks, touching his hand.

He pulls rears back in surprise and opens the door. "I'm fine, thanks."

"Thanks for the ride, Matt!"

"You're…"

Will jumps out so fast his phone falls out. Bev climbs from the back as he tries to get it but Matt gets there first.

"Here ya go," he says, holding the phone out to him."

Their hands brush when Will takes the phone. "Thank you."

He turns to shut the door when Matt stops him with his next words.

"Nasty scratches you got there."

He turns in surprise. "What?"

"Those scratches," he says, staring at Will's arms, "Pretty bad. How'd you get 'em?"

Will's whole body feels like ice. "I…ran into some rocks swimming."

"Gotta be careful out there, Will. You never know what lies below."

He suddenly feels so thirsty it hurts to talk. "I will."

Will closes the door and runs toward the house. Bev stands in the doorway smiling.

"What was that about, huh?"

"Nothing," he says hoarsely, "I…"

His phone vibrates in his hand and he looks down.

Are you?

He blinks back tears. "I...gotta go home."

"What? You just got here."

Will looks out and sees Matt staring as he walks toward the Katz's car. His eyes look so green they're almost glowing in the sun.

"I…I'm not feeling well."

"I can have Matt—"

"No! I'm...I can walk."

Bev frowns. "You sure?"

Will nods. "I'll text you. Thanks, Bev."

He doesn't wait for her to reply before heading for the trail. Will feels Matt's eyes on him as he walks by and he turns to see Matt leaning against the car smoking. He smiles at him and blows out a cloud of smoke .

"See you around, Will."

Will nods but doesn't look his way. The walk home he's shaking so bad and thirstier than he's ever been. He feels instant relief when he sees the house and his visor is red as he nearly runs only for Hannibal to step outside.

"Will, what's…?"

"I'm fine," he says, his voice shaking as he tries to pass, "I just need to…"

Hannibal grabs his arm and breathes in before his eyes look red. "Who were you with?"

"Let go of me" Will hisses, trying to pull his arm back.

"Tell me why you smell like that?" Hannibal snaps, his skin looking blue, "Who…"

"You're hurting me!"

He lets go instantly and Will stares down at the blue bruise on his arm.

"Will...I apologize, I…"

Will runs into the house in tears and goes right to the bathroom. He rips off his clothes and jumps into the ice cold shower.

He closes his eyes and lets the cool water fall over him.

The fear fades as he stands there and the water warms. He washes only his arms though he stares at the blue bruise on the one Hannibal touched.

He knows that he's changing, but into what he's not sure. Will turns off the shower and goes right to his room where a sandwich is waiting.

Peanut butter and strawberry jelly.

Will eats sitting in his towel and puts on his last clean pair of sweats and underwear. He goes to toss his other clothes into the hamper and finds it empty.

“Hannibal.”

A sudden warmth fills him and he hates it.

He hates everything about this summer.

Will puts a hand on his bare back and feels for something he knows won’t be there. He lays back on the bed and closes his eyes.

For a moment he imagines swimming with the blue finned creature and for the first time all day feels calm.

He wants to go back to the water.

But not today.

Will sighs.

His day might have begun with fear but he wouldn’t let it end that way. He picks up his phone and texts Bev.

I’m home.

You ok?

Yeah, I’m fine.

He puts the phone into his pocket and goes out into the hall. There’s music playing that he heads for and finds Hannibal sitting with his back to him in a room he didn’t notice before.

“Um…”

Hannibal turns.

“Will, please come in.”

Will walks into the room and looks around. It’s not big but not exactly small. “I didn’t know you had an office.”

“Yes, I…”

“It’s nice.”

“Thank you. I…would like to apologize for my appalling behavior. It’s none of my concern who you spend your time with.”

Will rubs his arm. “Thank you.”

“I…let my…emotions get the better of me.”

He feels warm.

“It…there was this mechanic at Bev’s. That’s…why I smelled like smoke.”

“I see.”

“He…”

Hannibal shakes his head. “No need to explain further. I would just ask you to be careful. Not everyone has good intentions, no matter how they seem.”

Will nods. “I know.”

“I took the liberty of putting your clothes in the washing machine while you were out, I believe they should be ready to be put into the dryer.”

Will frowns. “Um…where is the laundry room exactly?”

Hannibal smiles. “I will show you.”

They walk out of the office together, down the hall, and past the kitchen to a small room set off from everything else. Hannibal goes right to the front loading washing machine pulling out Will’s clothes.

“They—”

Both of them look at the clothes in his hands.

They’re covered in white blotches.

“I…don’t understand. I used regular detergent.”

Will’s chest tightens.

“I don’t…what am I going to wear?”

Hannibal tosses the ruined clothes back into the machine and gently takes his hands. “This is my fault, Will. I will, of course, take you out shopping first thing in the morning. It’s the least I can do.”

“Hannibal…”

“Please, Will. Let me remedy this.”

Will hates how excited he feels at the idea of spending another day alone with him. “Ok.”

Hannibal smiles. “Thank you. Now, what would you like for dinner? Fish?”

“Is that ok with Leanne?”

“Your mother is….resting. I will cook her something separately.”

“Then…yeah.”

“Alright, then. I will come get you when dinner is ready.”

“The clothes?”

“I will dispose of them. Go enjoy a film until dinner.”

Will smiles. “Ok.”

He leaves the laundry room feeling a million times better than he has all day and when he turns on a movie he’s so happy he feels it down to his toes.

Maybe he doesn’t hate everything about this summer after all.

Chapter 17

Dinner is the last of their catch from just days before, along with garlic mashed potatoes made in some weird way mixed with vegetables that's amazing.

"I think there's nothing you couldn't get me to eat."

Hannibal smiles. "We'll see, I suppose. There's still plenty of summer left."

Will laughs. "I guess."

Dessert is strawberry peanut butter tarts with whipped chocolate cream. Will eats his third of the six Hannibal made when suddenly he remembers what happened this morning.

"Will?"

"I…you can see my scratches."

Hannibal frowns and reaches out to touch his closest arm. Will feels warm when he runs his fingers over the scratches. "Yes."

"Bev…this morning she couldn't see them and then suddenly she did."

"Perhaps she just wasn't paying attention."

Will grabs his hand. "No, it…there was this mechanic at her house today that noticed right away too. He's why I smelled like smoke. He saw them too."

Hannibal's lip curls. "He upset you."

"A little," Will admits, "But…"

"I'm not sure what you want me to say, Will. I noticed the scratches because I looked you up and down closely for injuries. As for the mechanic, perhaps he was looking at you closely for…other reasons."

Will frowns. "But Bev thought they weren't bad and you and Matt…"

Hannibal sighs. "Everyone has different degrees of bad, Will," he whispers, still touching, "Though they are looking better. Are the ones on your hips still prominent?"

He feels warm all over but doesn't want him to stop.

"Yeah, but they don't hurt."

"If they do, I'm more than happy to take a look."

"Ok, I...was gonna ask you about tomorrow."

Hannibal smiles. “I know just the place to take you. I think you’ll like it.”

“Not too expensive, right?”

“Of course not.”

Will forces himself to pull away from his touch, looking away. “Good, really it was an accident and you really shouldn’t think you have to buy my anything. I…”

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek and stares into his eyes.

“I want to, Will. I assure you I have plenty of money and if I can fix this…please let me.”

“Ok. But I’ll pay you back. I want to pay you back. I usually get summer jobs and I can—”

“No,” Hannibal says, shaking his head, “I want you to enjoy your summer. Just let me give you this.”

He smiles. “Ok.”

“Now, I do believe…” Hannibal starts to say and reaches for his arm again.

Will stands up fast. “I think I’m gonna go to bed.”

“Oh.”

“I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, frowning, “Goodnight, Will.”

Will begins to walk toward his room but stops just before he gets inside. The door at the end of the hall suddenly calls for him, and he walks down toward it with a tight feeling in his chest.

It’s just starting to get dark outside so he can almost make out Leanne lying on the bed. Her face looks pale, sickly, and Will wishes he cared more that it does. He watches for longer than he should, not even sure why he came down here, and turns to go when her eyes open.

“Sweetheart.”

“I was just coming to see how you were.”

Leanne holds out her hand and Will can’t help but step inside the room to take it.

She’s colder than she should be covered in all those blankets.

“My baby came to check on me.”

Will frowns. “Maybe you need to go to the hospital? You’ve been sleeping a lot.”

Leanne smiles. “Hanni says I’ll get better faster if I sleep more. He’s a doctor, sweetie. He knows what he’s doing.”

He bites his lip. “Ok.”

“Did you have a good day today?”

“Um….”

Will feels like someone is watching them and turns to see Hannibal standing in the hallway. He’s carrying a tray with a bowl and mug on it.

“I see you’re awake. Are you hungry, Leanne?”

“Not really, I”m still---”

He walks around Will and sets the tray over her before sitting down on the bed. “Eat,” he says, his voice soft, “For me.”

Will watches her pick up the spoon slowly and drop it in the soup. “Shit.”

“Here, let me.”

He looks away as Hannibal starts to feed her. “I’ll leave you guys alone. I hope you feel better, Mom.”

“Thank you, sweetheart. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight, Will.”

Will doesn’t look back as he closes the door and pulls out his phone the minute he’s in his room.

I hope you’re ok.

Matt asked about you after you left. He thinks he freaked you out. I think he’s just a little bit much.

You’re pissed at me, right?

No, I just didn’t like him.

Ok. No more Matt.

He sighs and falls back on his pillow.

If I told you something weird do you think you’d still want to be friends with me?

Other than you having a crush on your Mom’s boyfriend?

Yeah.

I'm a weirdo too so I don't think there's a lot that you could say. Unless you're a serial killer or a creature from the black lagoon.

Will's hands shook as he started to type but a knock at the door made him pause.

"Yeah?"

"May i come in?"

He puts his phone down. "Yeah."

Hannibal frowns. "I just came to check on you."

"I'm fine."

He sits on Will's bed. "I thought perhaps seeing Leanne may have upset you."

"No, I just...why aren't you taking her to the hospital?"

He sighs. "Your mother's condition is….complicated. She often eats things she shouldn't and mixes pain pills with alcoholic beverages. I try to discourage this type of behavior but she doesn't listen."

Will frowns. "Oh."

Hannibal puts his hand over Will's. "She will be fine. Don't let this worry you."

"Ok."

"I believe she, like all of us, has demons she's trying to work through. Your presence here will help assure that she ends this summer right where she should be."

Will smiles. "I hope so."

"As do I," Hannibal says, standing, "Goodnight, Will. I hope you have pleasant dreams."

"Thanks. Goodnight."

Will stares at the closed door after he's gone and feels suddenly super tired. He sighs, barely able to keep his eyes open, and before he can even lay his head down he's out.

He wakes up to an alarm he doesn't remember setting on his phone.

His phone says it's eight thirty but it feels like five a.m. He pulls on his last clean t-shirt and shorts before heading out into the hall. The smell of bacon lures him surprisingly not toward the dining room this time. He finds Hannibal setting a table on the back porch.

"Um….good morning."

Hannibal smiles as he sets down a plate. "Good morning, Will. Please sit. Did you sleep well?"

Will nods as he sits down. “What’s all this?”

Hannibal smiles as he joins him.

“I thought perhaps you’d like a change of scenery today.”

He looks at his plate. “Just regular eggs, bacon, and orange juice?”

“I was rather busy planning our day that I didn’t have time to make a more elaborate meal. I apologize.”

Will smiles. “It’s ok. I like eggs.”

“I’m glad to hear it.”

They eat in a comfortable silence, occasionally smiling across the small table, and it feels like no time has gone by at all when Hannibal speaks.

“The first place I want to take you is some ways away. We’ll be driving at least an hour.”

Will takes the last bite of his eggs. “First? How many places are we going?”

“I have at least six planned but if you’d rather not we can narrow it down to four.”

“Hannibal, I said I didn’t want you to spend—”

Hannibal frowns. “And I said I have plenty of money. Please let me do this for you, Will. We can narrow places down to three if that makes you more comfortable.”

He sighs and takes a sip of his juice.

“Fine.”

“Are you finished?”

Will nods and doesn’t watch him take the dishes away. He stares out at the water, feeling that familiar want to be under again, but fear from yesterday makes his chest ache.

The green fin creature wants him for something and he feels like it can’t be anything good.

He’s so caught up in staring at the lake that he doesn’t notice Hannibal’s return.

“Will?”

Will shakes himself before grabbing his juice glass and chugging the rest of it in one breath. He feels so strange.

“Sorry, I didn’t—”

“Would you like to go for a swim? We have plenty of time.”

He shakes his head and stands, pushing in the chair.

“No, I’m fine. Let’s go.”

Will walks down the stairs and around toward the front of the house not bothering to wait. He doesn’t look at the water still as he goes to the car and is happy to find the door open.

The scent of Hannibal’s cologne makes him calmer somehow once he’s inside and he puts on his seatbelt closing his eyes.

He opens them when Hannibal joins him after what feels like forever.

“I apologize. I checked on Leanne.”

“She’s awake?”

“No. I wrote a note at her bedside that we would be gone for some time. I’m sure she’ll be awake when we return.”

Will frowns. “Just how much does she drink? I mean, I’ve seen her with wine and…”

“You’d rather not know, Will. Believe me on this.”

He looks back at the housers the pull away. “Maybe she needs to go somewhere.”

“I’ve said as much,” Hannibal sighs, “But she…your mother is a proud person. She won’t take help and doesn’t want anyone telling her what to do.”

“She lets you tell her what to do,” Will mumbles.

“Not always.”

They don’t talk for a while after that and Will plays games on his phone. He doesn’t see any new texts from Bev and hates where his mind goes because of it.

He shouldn’t even have said anything.

“You seem upset.”

“It’s nothing.”

“Will, you can talk to me.”

He shakes his head. “It’s nothing, ok?”

“It doesn’t seem that way.”

“You wouldn’t believe me even if I told you.”

“You won’t know until you do.”

Will looks out the window. “I guess I’ll never know.”

The scenery around them seem to change the closer they get to where they’re going. The houses are getting bigger, there’s less trees, and when they finally pull into the parking lot of the first store all the cars look super expensive.

“Are you sure….?”

“Everything is going to be fine.”

Will frowns as he gets out, and Hannibal puts a hand on his lower back as they walk toward the door of Gideon’s. This whole place just screams money, so much so that he feels poor just standing next to Hannibal in the clothes he has on.

A man in a blue suit comes up to them. He looos at Will and then Hannibal. “I didn’t realize you had a son, Doctor Lecter.”

“No, Abel. He isn’t. Will, this is Mr. Gideon.”

Abel holds out a hand and Will shakes it awkwardly.

“Nice to meet you, young man. I’ve been here for a very long time and never…” he puts his other hand over Will’s, “…had Dr. Lecter bring someone to dress. You must be very…”

Hannibal takes Will’s hand away from him and steps between them. “If we could begin, Abel?”

He watches the confident smile Abel had before fade into a thin line. If Will didn’t know any better he’d think Abel was afraid of Hannibal but no one else has been before.

“Right this way.”

They’re led to a private room off to the side with a curtain covering an area in the corner while the rest of the room is filled with empty racks. There’s even a table laid out with finger foods - cheese, some black gunk, and crackers - and glasses of wine.

“You’re probably a small,” Abel says, “Are we looking for everyday or…?”

“Everything,” Hannibal says, “All you can show us.”

Abel nods and disappears leaving him alone.

“I already know it’s too much money.”

“Nothing is too much.”

Will sits on a soft chair and sighs.

“This really isn’t my kind of thing.”

“You won’t know until you’ve tried it.”

He's not sure that's true.

Will's eaten some of that black gunk - caviar, apparently - and a hell of a lot of crackers by the time Abel returns.

Hannibal rejects about half of what he has and directs Will toward the curtain. "Please try them on."

"I…"

"Please."

Will does as he's told but still feels completely out of place. He puts on a striped tank top not unlike the ones he had before and a pair of purple shorts. There's no mirror so he has to walk out to know how he looks.

Hannibal smiles. "Perfect."

"It's just like my other clothes were."

"I assure you, Will, it isn't."

And it goes on like that all day.

Hannibal takes him to three stores, all run by people who seem happy to see him one minute and then get immediately weird the next. It's not like the phone store. Most of these people don't even smile until Hannibal hands over his credit card.

The last store is his favorite only because they stay there the least amount of time. The woman who helps them, her name is Staci, seems way too into Will and even he feels weird by the attention.

Hannibal only buys him two pairs of swim trunks and a speedo Will knows he'll never wear. He won't even let Will drink or eat anything the entire time.

"The nerve," he whispers, "How inappropriate."

Will stays close to him even as they leave.

"She was…a little much."

"Hmph."

He pulls out his phone when they're in the car and his eyes widen. "It's noon?"

"Yes, we've finished much sooner than I expected."

Will laughs. "Did you think we'd be out all night?"

"Possibly," Hannibal mumbles as they pull out of their spot, "Or at least till mid-afternoon."

“Well, I’m happy it’s over.”

“You didn’t enjoy yourself?”

He sighs. “I mean, the clothes are all really nice so thank you but…I’m not into stuff like that.”

The silence from Hannibal makes him turn to look.

Hannibal’s frown is so deep and his skin is bluish.

“Not that I—”

“What stuff *are* you into?”

Will blinks. “What?”

“Where would you like to go?”

“We don’t…”

Hannibal grabs his arm. “Tell me.”

“I could eat a sundae,” he says, smiling, “Or just…have a cheeseburger somewhere cheap.”

“You’d like to go to the shopping center back by the house.”

“Yeah.”

Hannibal smiles. “Then that is where we’ll go.”

Will pulls his arm back and sees a mark there. He frowns. “You spent enough on me already.”

“I’d like to end the day with you happy, Will. Indulge me?”

He nods. “Ok.”

The drive back is different than the one going. Hannibal turns on opera music and Will listens to him explain the story in detail, barely paying attention to the sound. His eyes almost light up when he gets excited, Will realizes, and the warmth he feels knowing that makes him happier than it should. Will opens up about one of the things he likes that he’s never had before, dogs, and tells Hannibal the story about how he followed one to someone’s backyard when he was little.

“…and I almost fell in the pool! Dad was so pissed he told me we’d never get one and…that summer he surprised me with Buster.”

“I didn’t know you had any pets.”

Will frowns. “Cuz he died in my first year of junior high. Stupid dog ran in the street.”

“I’m sorry, Will.”

“Thanks. We didn’t get any dogs after that.”

“But you’d like to? Someday?”

“Maybe.”

“I hope you get some then,” Hannibal says, patting his hand, “You seem to enjoy talking about them.”

He smiles. “A little.”

They pull into the parking lot of Fuller’s after what feels like way too long and Will’s stomach growls when they’re walking to the door.

“Get whatever you’d like, please.”

Will holds the door for him as they walk inside.

“You don’t want anything?”

He hands Will his card. “Surprise me.”

Will ends up getting them both cheeseburgers, fries, and strawberry sundaes with peanut butter on the side. The cashier looks at him funny but charges an extra dollar for the peanut butter.

He walks back to the table and Hannibal eyes the food with distrust. “You’re certain I’ll enjoy this?”

“Try it,” Will says, “For me?”

Hannibal nods before he takes a bite. “It’s…wet.”

Will laughs. “You don’t have to eat it.”

“No, no, I will. I’m sure it’s an acquired taste.”

Lunch is even more fun than the ride and by the time they’re eating their sundaes Will can’t even remember why he was mad at him as his face hurts from smiling so much.

A bell dings above the door and Will looks only to freeze as Matt the mechanic smiles his way.

“Will?”

Hannibal looks over and Will watches Matt’s smile widen at Hannibal before he turns away.

“That is your smoking mechanic?”

“Yeah,” Will mumbles, his stomach hurting, “Can we go?”

“Of course.”

They walk to the garbage can just as Matt comes over with a bag in his hand. “Hey Will,” he says, “This your Dad?”

Hannibal steps between them. “No, he’s…”

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter,” Hannibal all but growls, holding out his hand, “And you are?”

Matt shakes his hand and looks close to laughing. “Matthew Brown. Nice to meet you.”

They stare at each other for way too long. “Hannibal…”

“I hope our paths cross again,” Hannibal says, squeezing Matt’s hand until Will sees the younger man wince, “In better circumstances.”

Matt’s green eyes seem to glow in the sun as he rubs his hand. “Yeah, me too,” he says, looking at Will, “Lookin’ good today, Will. See you around.”

He winks before he leaves and Will can see the anger all over Hannibal’s face.

“Hannibal?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “Let’s go home, Will.”

The walk to the car is tense, quiet, and Will hates every minute of it. He buckles himself in and goes to turn away before Hannibal grabs his arm.

“That man.”

“He’s…a lot.”

Hannibal squeezes his arm. “Are you attracted to him?”

Will blinks. “What?”

“He’s obviously close to your own age and seems very clearly attracted to you. Are you… interested?”

“Are you jealous?” Will says, shaking his head, “You, who’s dating my mother and fucking her is jealous twice in ONE day about people even *thinking* about fucking me?”

“Will…”

He laughs, ripping his arm away from him. “You’re such a hypocrite, I can’t….no, I’m not into Matt the creep who stares at me like he wants to eat me. Happy?”

Hannibal sighs. “No, I’m not very happy at all.”

Will gets more and more angry as drive back to the house and by the time they pull up he's in tears. He fights to undo his seat belt until he lets out a sob of frustration and Hannibal leans over to help him. Will hates how good he smells, and when he's freed they stare at each other.

"That man is...promise me you'll...be safe around him."

He laughs as a tear falls down his cheek. "Not that it's any of your business but I won't be around him at all if I can help it. Can I go now?"

Hannibal moves away from him and Will tosses his phone to the ground before he runs to the water. He doesn't care he's not wearing a swimsuit, and the minute he goes under he swims away fast.

The fear that the green fin creature might be waiting means nothing right now.

Will lets out a scream under the water that he feels in his very bones and heads for the only place that feels safe right now: the cave.

Chapter 18

Will swims until his arms are tired, shaking with anger, and rushes to the surface to take a breath almost by habit. The sound of jet skis and boats echoes in the distance but it seems, like always, their side of the lake is quiet.

He dives back under the heads straight for the cave, slipping through the small entrance and rising to the surface once he's inside. His clothes feel heavy on him, almost falling off as he moves, but he doesn't care.

"Are you here?" he asks, his voice shaking.

The creature understood him the last time he was here, but maybe it picked up something else. He sighs, leaning against the rocks, and closes his eyes.

"I just...want someone to trust."

Will feels tears fall down his face.

"If there was anyone that understood what's happening to me, I think…"

A sudden splash makes him look up in time to see he's not alone.

It isn't a blue fin he sees this time.

The creature is peering out of the water with just its eyes and top of its head visible. He can see a ridge of scales and a flared webbed arch around the back of its head. The creature's eyes are just as red as Will remembers.

"Hi."

It doesn't move.

"I'm not...I don't even know why I'm here. I just…needed somewhere to go that's safe."

The creature seems to be waiting for something.

"I'm talking to a sea monster about how safe I feel around it," he laughs, "I'm going crazy."

Will lifts his hand out of the water and laughs when he sees his webbed fingers.

"See? I'm...I think...I might be like you," he lets out a sob, "It's crazy, and freeing, and terrifying but...I...I just need…"

The creature moves closer, never lifting its head, and Will gasps when it lifts up a hand.

Their hands look the same.

Will can hardly see through his tears as he laughs. “Oh god...I…”

He lifts up his other hand and stares at the both of them. They should be ugly, he knows that, but all he sees when he looks is blue.

The calming, beautiful blue.

“I don’t understand what’s going on,” he whimpers, “I...god I wish you could talk.”

The creature grabs Will’s hand and suddenly turns him around again like before. He gasps, shaking, and feels it sniff at him.

“What are you…”

It tears off Will’s shirt with a quick clawing, and begins to lick down his back. He moans and feels heat fill him. “Oh god...you...I…”

The creature sucks on his neck hard, almost biting, and Will feels his cock harden the longer it goes on. ““Yes,” he gasps, “Fuck...I…”

It pulls back, licking softly, and starts again on the other side.

Will’s so hard he can barely breathe, arching back as it continues, and when he comes it’s with a gasp, spilling into his shorts. The creature makes an odd purr noise and he laughs, shaking as the creature pulls away.

“I guess I’m not scared of you anymore.”

The creature runs its scaly fingers over both marks as if it’s trying to remember them.

“You can...I….I’d let you do more.”

It pulls back and Will turns in time to see the blue fin before the creature goes under. He doesn’t try to chase after it this time, knowing he’s not fast enough, and leans back against the rocks to touch the marks on his neck.

These marks are different from the scratches.

They feel like a promise.

He smiles.

Whatever happens to him he knows the blue creature wants him.

That feels like enough.

“This is so weird,” he laughs, tears filling his eyes.

He’s scared, but...he’s happy.

Will doesn't know how long he stays there, basking in the glow of it, but when he finally leaves he feels safe to take his time getting home. He doesn't come out of the lake until dark, suddenly very hungry, and finds a pile of dry clothes by the door.

He changes into them, not caring if Hannibal is peeping at him from the window, and lays his wet clothes out on the porch.

There's noise coming from the dining room.

Leanne's awake.

Will would normally want to avoid seeing her and Hannibal together but he's so happy right now he couldn't care less. He walks right in and they both look at him in surprise.

"Will honey, you….oh. Well, well, well...would ya look at that?"

Hannibal's eyes don't leave him even after he sits down. "What's for dinner?"

"Some sort of garlic chicken thing with baked potatoes," Leanne says, her smile wide, "Enjoy your swim, sweetie?"

Will smiles as Hannibal hands him a plate. "Yes."

"You...were not alone?" Hannibal asks, eyes fixated on Will's neck.

"No."

"Your friend was a little...excited," Leanne laughs, "She must've…"

"What makes you think it was a girl?" Will asks, glaring at her as he cuts his meat, "You barely know me, how do you know who I'm even attracted to?"

She blinks. "Well, I…"

"We just want you to be careful, Will," Hannibal says, still staring openly at Will's obvious hickeys, "You...are being careful?"

"Yes," Will lies, taking a bite, "I'm not an idiot."

"Well," Leanne says happily, "Girl, boy, or whoever....we're happy you're having a good time! Right, Hanni?"

Will looks at Hannibal who is quite obviously jealous. "Of course."

He smirks as he takes another bite. "Thank you."

"Maybe your little friend can stop by sometime?"

He almost laughs. "Maybe."

Dinner is mostly filled with Leanne's rambling after that. Will can tell she's feeling slighter better, the gaunt look he saw before is gone, but he knows it won't last.

It's been a little over a week and it's never lasted.

Will barely touches dessert, some ice cream thing, and suddenly remembers he tossed his phone hours ago before jumping into the lake. "Can I be excused?"

"Oh honey, you don't haveta ask," Leanne says, "Go on."

He rushes outside, frantic, and is in tears as he looks.

"Will."

Will looks up and sees Hannibal on the porch holding his phone. "You tossed it to the side," he says, "I thought it best to retrieve it."

He walks up the stairs, blinking back tears as he takes the phone from him. "Thank you."

"You seem happier," Hannibal says, "Are you happier, Will?"

Will sniffles, and moves to pass by. "Now that I have my phone? Yeah, sure."

Hannibal grabs his arm. "You know to what I'm referring."

He glares at him. "You already decided what you wanted, Dr. Lecter," he whispers, "And it's not me. So back off."

"I never said those words."

Will feels his stomach start to hurt. "You said…"

"I said…"

"Hanni? You bringing the wine?"

He smiles. "Go on, Hanni," he whispers, yanking his arm away, "She needs the wine."

Will slams the screen door as he goes through, and walks to his bedroom. He expects to find the bags from the store sitting for him to put away but all the clothes seem to be folded or hung already. He runs his hand over the dress shirts Hannibal made him try on and sighs.

Like he has anywhere he's gonna go that he can wear this.

He closes his closet and leans against it closing his eyes.

There's no need to think about that.

Not tonight.

Will sits on his bed and pulls out his phone to see more texts from Bev.

And a missed call from his Dad.

He sits on the bed and presses send lying back as the phone rings.

"Will?"

"Hey Dad. Sorry I didn't pick up the phone I was swimming out in the lake."

His father is quiet. *"Oh?"*

"Yeah, what's up?"

"You been swimming a lot?"

"Yeah," he sighs, *"Not much else to do other than watch movies."*

"But you're doing ok? Nothing bad has happened since we last talked?"

"No, Dad. Just met a girl I've been hanging around and…"

Will considers if he should tell him about the murder at the party. His dad has already mentioned trying to get him home just from Leanne being sick. This might push him over the edge.

"And?"

"She's nice. We're just hanging out, it's not what you're thinking."

"Son, you can have all the friends you want. I don't care if you never date. Saves me the trouble."

Will laughs. *"Well...there's some stuff with that but nothing I can talk about yet."*

"Hmm, sounds fishy to me."

He bursts into giggles.

"Hey, I'm funny!"

"Dad, you...I love you, Dad."

"I miss you, Son. This summer can't end soon enough."

Will sighs.

He's not so sure.

"Yeah."

"Is Leanne awake this time? Can I speak with her?"

Will frowns. *"Why?"*

"I can't talk to my ex-wife who insisted on seeing our son after leaving him for almost sixteen years?"

"You're not gonna start a fight, are you? Dad she's been sick."

"Will, let me talk to her."

He gets up off the bed and peers out into the hallway. The sound of music playing from the front means they're not in bed yet. Will walks down the hall and stops when he spots them on the couch.

Leanne is sound asleep on Hannibal's shoulder. He looks up as Will approaches. "Will? Did you need something?"

"Um," he says, "My Dad wants to talk to Leanne."

Hannibal frowns. "She's asleep at the moment. I don't expect her to wake. Is there a problem?"

"Convenient she's always asleep when I call."

Will shakes his head. "No, it's fine. Uh...goodnight."

"Goodnight."

He walks back down the hall with a stomach ache that seems to worsen. *"Dad?"*

"I'll call her myself tomorrow, Son. Don't worry about it. Just...be safe. Alright?"

Will nods. *"I will."*

"Goodnight, Son."

"Goodnight, Dad."

Will ends the call and puts his phone on the bedside table. He touches the marks on his neck and feels warm calm fill him.

He sighs.

There were some moments where Hannibal seems to not even like Leanne and others where he treats her so well Will knows why she fell for him in the first place. What were his true feelings?

He pulls up his laptop and types 'Dr. Hannibal Lecter' into the search engine.

A website for Hannibal's practice comes up, and Will smiles at the pictures. The site is filled with testimonials about how 'amazing' and 'kind' Dr. Lecter is and the pictures almost capture just how handsome Hannibal is in person.

He stays on the computer for almost two hours searching and finds pictures of Hannibal at events. He's almost always alone, but one of them has Leanne in the photo. Will is struck by how different she looks.

She looks at least ten years younger.

The date is only from a year ago.

Will frowns.

How much drinking was his Mom really doing?

He finds accolades all over for Hannibal talking about his charity work, bedside manner, and just overall how amazing he is.

But he can't find a thing about his past.

Will knows he can google himself and find pretty much nothing other than social media he's barely touched since he got here but there's at least pictures. His Dad still loves posting old baby pictures of his to Facebook.

He closes his laptop and sets it on the dresser.

Why did he care so much about Hannibal anyway?

His phone vibrates on the table and he picks it up.

You mad at me?

No. Just had a long day.

A good one?

Maybe.

Tell me everything.

Hannibal messed up my clothes and took me shopping most of the day. We ended up getting in a fight and I met someone in the lake.

The lie makes him feel bad, but he hopes it'll stop her from bringing up Matt again.

Ohhh! Anyone I know?

Will smiles and lays down. **Nope. I'm not telling you his name either. Not yet anyway.**

No fair. Fine, I won't tell you about the two hour long conversation I had with Abby today.

You just did.

**shakes fist at you* Damn. Yeah I did.*

That's great though. I'm happy for you.

Happy for you too. You wanna hang out tomorrow? I have ZERO plans.

He pauses.

Is the car fixed?

You mean is Matt gone? Yep. No Matt. I promise.

Yeah, I'll come over. But just to warn you ahead of time, I sort of...have...some hickeys.

WILL! OMG!

I'll see you tomorrow Bev. Around lunchtime? I can take the car so we can go out maybe?

YES! SHOW OFF THOSE LOVE BITES!

Goodnight Bev.

Goodnight Will.

He sets his phone down and smiles touching his neck. The memory of the creature's mouth makes him hotter and hotter until he can't resist opening his shorts. He closes his eyes and starts to stroke, biting his lip hard as the heat builds, and even here in his room he can smell the water.

Will feels his hand shift but doesn't stop, letting out a moan as he imagines the creature's hand, and digs his other into the marks on his neck. He can almost feel the weight on his back, the water as it moves, and whimpers as he can't seem to stop.

"Please," he hisses, "Pl…"

He digs hard into the bite and knows he's drawn blood when he finally spills across his webbed fingers. He opens his eyes and pulls out his hand, trying to catch his breath, and stares at his hand.

It's never happened outside of the water before.

Will smiles and turns to look for something to wipe off with when his door opens. He rolls away, bright red, and curses.

"God, you couldn't knock?"

"I did knock, Will," Hannibal says, "You just didn't hear me."

"Well...obviously."

"I apologize, I...merely wanted…"

“Can you go?” Will growls, “I’m fine.”

“Yes, of course.”

He looks over his shoulder to be sure the door is closed again before he looks at his hand.

It’s normal again.

Will frowns.

Weird.

He wipes off his hand and dresses down for bed before turning off the lights. Will puts something on streaming that he knows he won’t give much attention.

He smiles as his eyes start to feel heavy.

Today might not have been perfect but it could’ve been worse.

He only hopes tomorrow is even better.

Chapter 19

Breakfast is eggs with sausage in them, what Hannibal calls a “protein scramble.” Will doesn’t comment on Leanne not being there with them, nor does he say anything about Hannibal blatantly staring at the hickeys on his neck.

“I’m going to Bev’s later,” he mumbles, taking a sip of juice.

Hannibal frowns. “Is that man going to be there?”

“No,” Will says softly, “She told me he wouldn’t.”

“I see.”

“I’m taking my car.”

Hannibal’s skin looks bluish and his eyes are doing that weird thing again. “Oh.”

“We’re probably gonna go to lunch or something.”

“You’ll be home for dinner?”

“Maybe.”

“Will…”

He wants to argue, throw another fight, but there really doesn't feel like a point anymore. Hannibal wants him one minute and doesn't the next. He can't keep up with it. They haven't known each other all that long really.

Will's sure he'll get over it.

But the pain in his belly says otherwise.

"I'll try."

"Thank you."

Will leaves without saying goodbye after, and for the first time in a while drives his car. The memory of the last time he did makes him a little upset but he's sure to be over it by the time he pulls up to Bev's.

She's sitting on the porch outside to greet him.

"OH MY GOD!"

He laughs as she runs up and reaches out to touch his neck.

"Don't!" he says, pulling back, "I...it's still sore."

She smiles. "Graham, you...I can't believe you! How did you meet this guy?"

Will blushes as they walk to the porch and sit. "I've seen him before when I was swimming," he sighs, "He's...kinda quiet."

Bev sighs. “You’ve had this guy hidden away all this time and didn’t tell me? Bad, Will!”

He smiles. “We weren’t...till last night.”

“Ohhh!”

“But...I feel like myself around him.”

Bev grins. “That’s great though. I’m happy for you, Graham. Honestly. Though I do need to meet this guy.”

“We’ll see how it goes. He’s busy a lot...uh...swimming...he’s on the swim team.”

“During the summer?”

“It’s a thing, I guess?” He lies, standing up, “Are you hungry now or want to just go out later?”

“Now,” she groans, standing, “I’m starved.”

They get in Will’s car and Bev whistles looking around. “Not bad, not bad.”

“My dad fixed it up for me,” he mumbles, starting the car, “It gets me around.”

“It’s nice.”

He puts on music, whatever sounds like top forties, and drives off.

"So…"

"I know you have a guy, and don't want to talk about Matt but…"

"Bev…"

"He really does seem to like you. That's all I'm saying. I'll shut up about it."

Will frowns as they head toward the shopping center. "I saw him yesterday when I was out with Hannibal."

"Oh shit."

"Yeah," he says, shaking his head, "He just seems weirdly creepy and I think he was getting off on making Hannibal jealous."

"Don't you *want* Hannibal to be jealous?"

Will sighs. "I don't know what I want anymore."

"Oh," she says softly, "So this new guy he's...putting you off all that?"

He smiles. "Maybe? Probably? I dunno. I just...don't care about Hannibal anymore."

The words make his stomach hurt and he winces.

“Will?”

“I’m fine. It’s nothing.”

Really it is.

“Ok, if you’re sure.”

He forces a smile. “I’m ok.”

The drive toward the shopping center Bev sings under her breath to songs Will doesn’t know the words to and by the time they get there he’s a little hungry himself.

“Where do you want to go? There’s a taco place I think up the street or…”

“Fuller’s?”

Will shakes his head. “No, I...no.”

“Um...what about McDonald’s? I haven’t had a McFlurry in ages.”

“McDonad’s it is.”

They pull into the parking lot and the drive thru looks super busy so they go inside. Will stares up at the menu, lost in thought, and is so focused on figuring out what he wants he almost misses it’s his turn.

Bev pokes him in the back.

“Oh! Um….a….fries and...a Big Mac?”

“Anything else sir?”

“What do you want, Bev?”

“What?” Bev asks, “I’m not letting you pay for me. I’ll pay for you.”

“Bev…”

“I want a Chicken Sandwich meal with a Tea and yes I’m paying.”

Will sighs as she hands over a card.

“I invited you.”

“You drove.”

He blushes. “Fine.”

They wait for their food and end up eating it inside. Bev pushes him a little more about his “mystery man” but he stays vague. It’s weird enough with just him and the creature in this. Adding her even as someone who knows sounds like a terrible idea.

The two of them are laughing as they walk out and are only a few steps from the door when a dog barking gets his attention.

He recognizes the truck immediately where it's waiting in line.

"Shit. Will…"

Matt sticks his head out and waves to them. "Hey you two! You wanna come meet Seaweed?"

A Jack Russell terrier jumps up into Matt's arms and Will's chest aches.

It looks just like Buster.

He's not gonna get in Matt's car.

He just...wants to pet the dog.

"Yeah," he says, his heart beating fast as he walks over.

Matt suddenly swerves out of the line and parks beside Will's car. He gets out with the dog inhis hands and Will walks up to pet Seaweed.

"Weird name for a dog," Bev mumbles.

"He likes to swim," Matt laughs, "And...he likes you, Will."

Seaweed licks Will's fingers and he laughs petting the dog. "He's cute."

"He's my best guy, aren't you?"

The dog tries to wiggle out of Matt's arms. "I should get him in the car but...can you guys hold him for a sec? I'm gonna go get food."

"Actually, we gotta…"

"Sure," Will says, smiling so big his face hurts, "We can watch him."

Matt hands the dog over to Will. "Thanks."

The minute he's gone Bev slaps Will on the back. "What's wrong with you? You said he was a creep!"

"The dog isn't," he says, as Seaweed licks his face again, "I'm not getting in his car, Bev. I...I like dogs, ok?"

She sighs and pets Seaweed. "I like dogs too but that's not gonna make me get into some creep's car."

"We're *next to* the car, not in it."

Bev smiles when Seaweed licks her hand. "He's a cutie."

"Yeah."

Seaweed tries to wriggle out of Will's arms a few more times before they finally take him to Will's car. He walks around in the backseat and sniffs everything.

"So…"

“I’m not changing my mind about Matt.”

“Ok.”

Seaweed jumps back to the front seat and climbs into Will’s lap again after a while. He lays his head on Will’s arm and starts to fall asleep. “Awww.”

Will’s chest hurts thinking about Buster. “I had a dog like this a couple years ago,” he says, “He died.”

“Oh Will.”

“It’s ok.”

“Will, maybe…”

Matt returns what feels like too fast. He bends down to look inside. “He likes you, huh?”

Will feels the same cold chill that he remembers being close to Matt. “Yeah, you can have him back.”

“Nah, if you want to keep him a bit longer I can eat in the car. It’s…”

He shakes his head and lifts Seaweed up, waking him. “You can take him.”

Matt takes the dog in one hand and holds his food in the other. “Such a good boy.”

Will wants to be out of here as fast as possible. “Thanks for letting us see him.”

Matt smiles and stares at Will a bit too long. “Someone’s got a jealous boyfriend, huh?”

He blushes and puts a hand on his neck. “Um…”

Matt laughs just before his fingers brush Will’s neck. Will rears back, startled.

“I was just kiddin’,” he says, “See you both around,” he winks, “Later.”

They wait for him to go before pulling out of the McDonald’s lot themselves and Will still feels weird from Matt’s touch.

“You ok?”

“Yeah.”

“He really is coming on strong.”

“I guess.”

Will can’t seem to shake the need to wash off Matt’s touch to the mark as he pulls up to Bev’s.

“You wanna go swimming?” He asks.

Bev blinks. “Um...sure?”

“We don’t have to.”

She smiles. “I’m up for it. I haven’t even been in the water since Molly’s.”

He lets out a long breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding. “Ok. I’m wearing my trunks, so…”

Bev laughs. “What were you gonna do if I said no?”

Will blushes. “I don’t know, I just…”

She squeezes his shoulder. “I’m kidding, Will. C’mon. Last one in’s a rotten egg!”

They race to the Katz’s backyard and both jump in at the same time. Bev laughs when Will splashes her and he feels a million times better already. “Race ya?” Will asks.

“I don’t like that look,” she laughs.

“C’mon,” he teases, “I’ll go slow.”

She splashes him back. “Jerk.”

“One, two…”

Bev takes off faster than Will expects, and he follows right behind. The water erases any worries he had after Matt, and he hopes that the blue fin creature is watching him. He feels warm as he moves and tackles Bev before she’s even a few feet off pulling her under.

They both laugh when they resurface.

“Is your new boyfriend teaching you some moves cuz that was super fast!”

Will grins. “Maybe.”

She shakes her head. “I’m gonna get his name out of you eventually.”

“We’ll see.”

They swim back toward the house but stay in the water for a few more hours.

Bev’s mom comes out with a few floaters and Bev lays on one until Will flips it over making her dunk him. They both end up in separate ones after, just basking in the sun, and it’s a nicer time than Will’s had in a while.

That is until something flips his floater over too.

He hears Bev yell as he goes under and sees a green flash go by. Will rushes toward land but the green creature pulls him back roughly.

Will’s hands are webbed when he lashes out, and sees for the first time his own claws. The creature growls in his ear and puts its mouth over the mark on Will’s neck. The same one Matt touched just hours before.

He has tears in his eyes when he knocks back, desperate to get away, and then something pushes the creature off him.

It takes Will a minute to realize it’s his own tail.

Will swims as fast as he can toward land, screaming under the water in hopes the blue creature can hear, and barely makes it to the surface before he's grabbed again.

Bev rushes over and wraps her arms around him.

"Will, oh my god, oh my god...your arms...what WAS that?"

Will holds up his arms and sees new scratches from his wrist up to his elbows. Tears stream down his face. "I don't…"

He buries his face in Bev's neck.

"I'm gonna call an ambulance," Bev's mom says.

"No!" Will yells out, "Call...call Hannibal."

"Honey, are you sure? Those look very bad."

"Hannibal," he says, shaking, "Call Hannibal."

"Okay."

Will and Bev lay in the grass and listen to her talking on the phone.

"Yes. It's pretty bad. He's bleeding. Uh huh. Yes. I will. Please hurry."

He stares out at the water as tears fall down his face.

Why didn't his creature come?

Will stares at the scratches on his arms and puts a hand over his neck. It feels so cold even though the green finned creature didn't bite down.

"He's on his way, honey. I'll get you a towel."

Bev doesn't let Will go even after her Mom returns, and he's wrapped in a towel when Hannibal arrives.

"Will!"

He lifts up his head as Hannibal rushes forward with a medical bag. His eyes are wild, skin nearly blue, and the anger as he looks over Will's arms is palpable.

"Do they hurt?"

"Yes," Will hisses, "I…"

Hannibal helps him up off the ground and over to the Katz's outdoor table where he begins to clean off the wounds. He wraps them both after and puts his hand over them.

"Better?"

"Yes."

They stare into each other's eyes.

Bev coughs. “Um, is he gonna be ok?”

“Yes. It...must’ve been a water snake.”

Will frowns. “It…”

“What?” Bev says, “It didn’t look like a snake to me. I’ve never seen a snake that big.”

“Water snakes can come in many shapes and sizes.”

“Ohhh,” Bev’s Mom says, “Do you think it’s safe to swim? Will it come back?”

“Perhaps stay out of the water for a few days.”

Will doesn’t contradict him. What’s he gonna say? No, it was a sea monster?

“Are you ok, Will?” Bev asks again, wrapping her arm around his neck.

“Yeah, I was just scared. It feels better.”

“Thank you, Dr. Lecter.”

“No need,” Hannibal says, “I’m more than happy to patch Will up.”

Will still feels like he might break down any minute now but holds it in.

“Would the both of you like to stay for dinner?”

“I…”

“I do believe that it might be best to take Will home now. He’s quite shaken. We’ll return for his car in the morning if that’s alright.”

“Of course.”

Will gives Hannibal a look he hopes shows how thankful he is for the save.

“Thank you for your hospitality,” Hannibal says softly, putting his hand on Bev’s Mom’s shoulder, “It’s much appreciated. Come now, Will.”

Will stands on shaky legs and follows Hannibal to his Bentley. He pauses at the door.

“I’m all wet.”

“I don't mind if the seats get damp.”

He gets in slow and has difficulty lifting his arm. Hannibal leans over and buckles it for him, and the closeness makes Will’s whole body warm up. They stare at each other.

“It’s not hurting you?”

Will shakes his head.

They drive down the road and turn on a street Will doesn't recognize but his arms hurt too much to care.

Hannibal pulls into a clearing and stops the car before he turns to him.

"Are you alright?"

Will sniffles. "I'm fine."

"Will…"

"I...I'm...I…"

Hannibal undoes his seatbelt and leans across Will's to unbuckle him too. He stares in Will's eyes. "Are you alright?"

Will shakes head before falling into Hannibal's arms. He lets out a sob, clutching to Hannibal so he tightly digs his nails in, and breathes in Hannibal's comforting scent.

"Shhh…"

"I...I…."

He runs his hand down Will's back. "You were very brave," he says softly, "You fought hard."

Will whines, clutching tighter. "I don't...I…"

Hannibal lifts his head and stares into Will's eyes. "Whatever that was, Mielasis, you saved yourself from it. I'm quite proud of you."

Will aches as he remembers the last time he called him that.

"What does that mean?"

"Dear," Hannibal whispers, brushing a hair off Will's face, "It means...dear."

"Am I….ready now?"

Hannibal runs a finger over Will's hickey and he shivers just as he hears it start to rain. "No," he whispers, "But...I find that I no longer care."

"Hannibal, please."

"Will, I…"

Will lets out a sob and opens the door running out into the rain.

He can't take this again.

Not again.

Will sobs, aching as he nearly trips and he looks up to see Hannibal standing in the clearing as rain hits down on him.

“JUST GO AWAY! I..”

Hannibal rushes forward and pulls Will into his arms. His eyes are bright red and his skin is so blue that Will can’t look away.

“I didn’t...I’m not…”

Will shakes his head. “I know I’m just a kid, and I...I...I *feel* something, Hannibal. I feel…”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “I feel it too, Mielasis. I feel it too.”

He kisses Will so softly Will’s almost certain he’s hallucinating, and he feels their touch of lips right down to his toes.

This is what he’s been aching for, what he needs, and he never wants to let go.

They pull apart and smile.

“This can’t be happening, it’s…”

Hannibal kisses him again.

“It’s very real, Will,” he whispers, “I promise you.”

Will lets out a laugh and kisses Hannibal again.

And again.

And again.

He doesn’t want to stop.

And now he doesn’t have to.

Chapter 20

They get back to the car soaking wet and he climbs into Hannibal's lap, unable to stop. Will loses track of how long they kiss, but when they finally pull the car away he's so warm he's sweating.

The two of them are smiling when they get to the house, and kiss again before leaving the car.

"We have to be careful."

"I know."

"Things...are going to change but others...will remain the same."

Will frowns. "I know."

"But I am not rejecting you, Will. I promise you that."

He smiles. "I know."

Hannibal touches his cheek. "Goodnight, Mielasis."

"Goodnight."

Will leaves the car first and heads right for his room where he takes off everything. He falls on his bed and laughs feeling so happy he might burst.

Hannibal kissed him.

And he got to kiss him back.

A LOT.

Will's arms don't even hurt when he gets up to put on a pair of sweatpants. His whole body is warm, almost hot, and he never wants it to stop. He sits on the bed and touches his lips.

His first kiss had lived up to the hype.

He grins and goes to lay down again when Hannibal knocks on the door.

Will smiles. "Yeah?"

"May I come in?"

"Uh huh."

He steps inside and leans against the door to smile at Will. "Your mother is asleep."

“Why am I not surprised?” Will asks, standing as he comes closer, “You think she’s asleep for the night?”

“I believe so, yes.”

Will stands in front of him, feeling bold, and touches his cheek.

“So…”

“So...what would you like to do for dinner?”

He licks his lips. “I could think of a few things.”

Hannibal kisses him softly and smiles. “Other than that.”

“Something easy, if you want? I could go for a sandwich or…”

“I believe something more celebratory is in order.”

“Hannibal, you don’t…”

He puts a finger over Will’s lips. “Shh. What would you like to eat tonight, Will?”

“I don’t care,” he says, pushing his hand away, “I’m just...really happy.”

Hannibal kisses him again, deeper, and Will whines when he pulls away.

“As am I,” he whispers, “I’m sorry for...upsetting you. I…”

“Shh,” Will says, putting hands around his neck, “Don’t even think about it now.”

“If you don’t mind the meal,” he whispers, “How about a different location?”

Will smiles. “Where?”

“I thought perhaps we could take a ride on the boat this evening.”

He tenses up.

“Will?”

“I’m…”

“Your ordeal,” Hannibal whispers, “I’m sorry, Mielasis, I’d almost forgotten. I...we can have dinner wherever you’d like. Just us two.”

“My room,” Will says, blushing, “We can watch movies and just...sit?”

Hannibal smiles. “Yes, that sounds just fine. I won’t take long in the kitchen, I promise.”

They kiss once more before he leaves, and Will looks for something to stream. He finds one of his favorite old slasher movies about a serial killer doctor that Hannibal might find funny. He leaves the movie on pause and goes to check his phone.

Are you ok?

I hope you're ok.

Please answer me, Will. I'm freaking out.

Will lets out a long breath before he responds.

I'm ok. I'm a little freaked out too. Hannibal's taking good care of me. Don't worry.

*Ok. *hugs* Please call me tomorrow?*

I will.

He sets down his cell phone and goes to look out of his window. The lake is calm, like always, but Will knows somewhere the green creature could be lurking. He shivers and reaches up to touch his neck.

The marks from his creature make him calm when he touches them.

Will frowns.

Now that he had Hannibal was he just gonna never see his creature again?

The idea makes him anxious.

Will turns away from the window.

He doesn't want to think about that now.

Not tonight.

Will's just about to go see what's taking Hannibal so long when Hannibal returns. He's holding a tray covered with two plates and two wine glasses.

He puts the tray down on the floor and comes up to Will with a frown. "What's wrong?"

Will shakes his head. "Nothing," he lies, "Everything's perfect."

Hannibal runs this thumb over Will's lips. "You're certain?"

"Yep."

"Okay then," he says, "I brought some sandwiches. Peanut butter and strawberry jelly. I've also acquired some of my personal vintage."

"What about wanting something more celebratory?"

Hannibal touches his cheek. “I think I’d rather celebrate through means other than the food.”

Will grins and leans forward only to move away before kissing him. Hannibal grabs hold of his wrist. “Why did you hesitate?”

“I…I dunno.”

“Don’t.”

He kisses him softly and sighs when Hannibal pulls him closer. The feel of their mouths together makes him warm, almost hot, and he moans when his tongue touches Hannibal’s teeth. He pulls back before he bites Hannibal’s tongue, turning away with an awkward smile.

“I won’t.”

“Good.”

Will checks his hands when he sits on the bed, worried they might suddenly shift into webbed blue. It’s gonna be even harder to keep his other self from Hannibal now, but being close like this will be worth the trouble.

Hannibal sets the tray on the bed and sits down beside him. “Have you chosen something?”

“It’s kinda like the one you saw before but the killer is a doctor. I thought…”

Hannibal smiles. “That sounds perfect.”

Will presses play before he grabs a sandwich taking a bite. Hannibal settles against his headboard and takes a bite of his own. “I’ve started to appreciate this combination. I have you to thank for opening my tastebuds to a new sensation.”

He blushes and leans against him. “You’re welcome.”

Hannibal takes his hand and Will squeezes.

“This really is…perfect,” Will says, staring at their hands, “It’s stupid but I’ve…thought about stuff like this.”

“What do you mean?”

He shakes his head and pretends to watch the movie.

“It’s nothing.”

“Will…”

Will doesn’t look at him when he answers. “Stuff like the other night when I saw Leanne asleep in your arms. I...I’ve thought about stuff like that.”

Hannibal’s arm wraps around Will tighter. “And what have you thought of?”

Will can feel his cheeks getting warmer. “Just...stuff.”

He leans in and kisses Will’s forehead. “I thought of *stuff* also, Mielasis. Though I will admit some of the...stuff...I’ve thought of might be more salacious than yours.”

Will looks up at him and smiles. “I’ve thought about that stuff too.”

Hannibal’s kiss then is soft, but deepens when Will reaches for him. His body seems to crave Hannibal’s touch now that he has it, and Hannibal doesn’t seem to mind. Will sighs as Hannibal reaches for his pants but pauses pulling back.

“We should stop,” he whispers, “I don’t wish to...push you into something you might not be ready for.”

Will shakes his head. “No, I…”

Hannibal kisses Will and pulls him into a tight hug. He resists the urge to beg as he feels a kiss to his neck. “We have all the time in the world, Will. I promise you.”

Will closes his eyes. “I’m ready,” he insists, “I am.”

“No,” Hannibal sighs, “But you will be,” he smiles and touches his cheek, “...soon.”

Will kisses him again.

“We don’t have to watch the movie.”

Hannibal smiles. “You’re fast becoming insatiable,” he whispers, kissing Will again and teasing his tongue against Will’s teeth making his whole body pulse in response, “Have I created a monster?”

Will laughs and presses their lips together again. “Perhaps.”

He pulls Will into his lap as suddenly someone screams on screen. They both turn to see the killer doctor slit the throat of a brunette cheerleader who dramatically collapses on the ground. Will bursts into tears as she goes into exaggerated convulsions.

“Oh my god,” he laughs, “I forgot how funny this was.”

“Murder as comedy,” Hannibal says, making Will turn, “I would not have expected you to be so amused. It is rather….graphic.”

Will grins. “I’m pretty desensitized to murder and blood from years of seeing it on screen like this. I’m sure you are too, being a doctor and all.”

Hannibal nods. “Yes.”

“If you want to watch something else we can…”

Hannibal leans in and kisses Will's neck. Will hears another scream on the TV and feels his whole body heat up as Hannibal licks across his skin. His scratches feel like they're on fire but he doesn't care.

"Mmmmm….and you," he wraps his arms around his neck to get closer, "...said *I* was the monster."

He teases a bite and Will moans, nearly coming in his pants. "Now that I've given into my...feelings I cannot seem to stop myself from getting more…"

"Inappropriate?"

"Yess," he hissed in Will's ear, "I…"

"You said we had all the time in the world."

"That we do, Mielasis, but...we only have tonight to begin."

Will bites his lip and blinks, his eyes suddenly red. He pulls back, shaking, and turns around.

"Will?"

"Maybe...we should watch the movie."

Hannibal wraps his arms around him. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah," he lies, squeezing his eyes closed and hoping the red goes away, "It's just...a lot all at once."

He feels Hannibal's lips to his cheek and sighs falling back against him.

"We can wait, Will," he whispers, "I'm more than fine with waiting."

Will looks at his hands, skin just fine and normal save for the red sheen over them, and grasps Hannibal's tightly. "Want me to get you up to speed on what we missed?"

"I think I can follow just fine. The Doctor is bad and everyone else is…"

"Dinner?"

Hannibal laughs and Will's heart beats faster.

"He's eating them?"

"Yeah," he says, squeezing his eyes closed again, "He's a cannibal."

"I see."

Will opens his eyes and is relieved to see normally again. He leans back, pulling Hannibal closer, and soon is laughing with him at the carnage on screen. They watch one more after Cannibal Doctor called Summer Slasher that's fairly new and kind of boring.

His eyes start to get heavy and he knows he should tell Hannibal but it's so nice to be this close.

"...and that is not the proper way to tie a windsor knot."

He smiles when he falls asleep, and when he wakes up there's light streaming in through his window.

And a very warm body under him.

Will lifts his head and his chest aches at the sight of Hannibal sleeping. He looks so peaceful, smells so good, and it almost makes him cry to think of waking him.

But he knows he must.

"Hannibal," he whispers, shaking him.

Hannibal smiles when he opens his eyes. "Good morning, Mielasis. You look...just lovely in the morning. I'm quite--"

"You need to get out of here."

He frowns at him. "Why?"

"Leanne is gonna wake up to an empty bed," he whispers as Hannibal puts a hand on his face, "And she'll wonder why you're not there and…"

Hanniba kisses him quiet, tasting of peanut butter and strawberry, and Will whimpers when they part.

"I'm sure she--"

A sudden knock makes them both freeze.

"Will?"

Will pulls off his shirt before he gets up. He gestures to the closet and Hannibal walks over like he hasn't got a care in the world. Will glares at him as he goes to close the closet and gets another kiss that makes his knees weak.

"Will? Are you awake?"

He wrenches himself away and closes the closet door before opening the other one.

Leanne looks worse than the last time he saw her.

"Yeah?"

She frowns. "Did you just get up?"

Will nods, hoping he doesn't blush as he lies. "Yep, just got up. I…fell asleep watching a movie late and..."

"Why are there two glasses and two plates on the tray?"

He turns to look at the tray and then looks at her. "Um...cuz I ate two sandwiches? You know how Hannibal is."

Leanne sighs. "I guess. I...you didn't hear him get up, did you?"

"Uh...maybe? I was pretty out of it but maybe he took a walk or...a swim?"

She suddenly brightens. "Oh, that's probably it! He does love to swim."

"Yeah, I…"

"I should go put on my suit! I can surprise him!"

He watches her almost run down the hallway again and shuts his door, leaning against it as Hannibal comes out of the closet.

Hannibal walks up to kiss him softly, tongue teasing Will's own, and when they part their foreheads rest against each other. "I suppose I must...derobe."

"What? You…?"

He suddenly pulls away from Will and takes off his clothes so fast Will barely gets a chance to enjoy the show. Will's cock aches as Hannibal turns around wearing a pair of dark green briefs.

The very same briefs Will remembers sniffing only days ago while he jerked off.

Will blinks and his vision is red but he can't look away as Hannibal climbs out of the window. He smiles at Will as he pushes the screen back down.

"I had a lovely night, Mielasis," he whispers, "I look forward to more."

He grins and puts his hand on the screen. "Me too."

And then he watches Hannibal run out into the lake in his underwear.

Will lets out a laugh, covering his mouth, and looks at the fallen clothes all over his floor. He hurries up to hide them under his bed and falls back down to laugh some more.

He's never been so happy.

Hannibal isn't going to turn him away, not again, and that felt like everything.

Will puts a hand on his neck and frowns.

He squeezes down the stomachache he gets thinking about not seeing the blue fin creature again and focuses on Hannibal.

Will hears Leanne suddenly call outside.

“Yoohoo!”

He’s chest hurts as he turns away from the window.

Oh.

Hannibal still has to play along with her, he knows that, but the idea of them being close makes his skin crawl.

He gets up off the bed and heads for the bathroom tossing off his clothes. The water is ice cold when he gets under it and he smiles when his skin turns blue. Will’s teeth seem heavy in his mouth as he blinks back tears.

“Fuck.”

Someone like Hannibal won’t be ok with this.

Right?

Will’s happiness suddenly feels like it’s over even before it’s begun.

He sits in the tub and lets the water go over him.

Hannibal might be fine with him being too young or too weird but he wouldn’t be ok with this.

Would Will be able to keep this whole new side of himself from him?

He stares at his webbed fingers and toes.

This feels like the real him.

Not the….person suit....he’s been living in till now.

Will lifts his head and lets the water go over his face.

It felt better than before but nothing like the lake.

What was he gonna do?

Hannibal felt like home.

The lake felt like home.

Which one was the real him?

And if it was this one...could Hannibal learn to love a monster?

Chapter 21

Will feels drained when he gets out of the shower and barely pays attention to the clothes he puts on before dragging himself down the hall to eat. The further he can be away from the window and see his mom all over Hannibal the better. He makes himself toast and leans against the sink to eat hoping to drown out any noises from outside.

Last night feels like a distant memory already.

He goes back to his room and closes the curtains before calling Bev.

"If I didn't like you so much, Will, I'd have to kill you for waking me up before ten."

He smiles and sits on the bed. *"Sorry."*

"It's okay. I was worried about you. You ok?"

"I'm fine, just...a little shaken up. Not sure I'm gonna be jumping back into the lake anytime soon."

Bev pauses.

"Mom and Dad don't want me to go in the lake to swim again either. They're thinking of buying a hot tub so that's something."

"It's kinda hot for that, isn't it?"

"That's what I said, but it's either that or put up a pool when there's water like two feet away."

Will sighs. *"I guess."*

"Everything else is ok, though?"

"Yeah," he lies, *"It's fine."*

"You don't sound fine."

"Bev..."

"I'll stop, I'll stop. You probably don't want to come over but maybe I can walk over there? We can watch something or---"

Will falls back on his bed and stares up at the ceiling. *"I'm not really...feeling up for it. Sorry. I just wanted to call cuz you asked."*

"Oh."

“I’m not mad, though. What happened had nothing to do with---”

“I’m gonna go, Will. Um, Mom just called out to me. I’ll text you later.”

“Bev--”

She ends the call and Will tosses his phone down onto the bed.

“Damnitt.”

It’s been little over a week and already he might’ve ruined the only friend he’d made out here.

Will sighs and gets up off the bed to peer outside.

Hannibal and Leanne are nowhere to be seen.

He looks out into the hallway and hears nothing. Where are they? It hadn’t been long since they’d gone outside, not really, so where could they have gone?

Will walks down the hall and outside.

The sun is beating down and the water looks so inviting but he only walks up to the edge to look out.

There’s no one out here.

He turns to leave when a splash gets his attention.

Will turns and freezes as he sees something far off in the water.

“Oh.”

The blue creature is peeking up again barely visible but very close. He looks around and sees no one before walking over. The creature goes back underwater and Will frowns.

‘Wait,’ he wants to say, but nothing comes out.

Will touches the marks on his neck and feels the warmth he so desperately craves. He sits by the water’s edge and puts his hands under up to his wrists. The cool feeling brings tears to his eyes.

It hasn’t even been that long since he was in the water but it feels like forever.

He brings one hand up and stares at his webbed blue fingers. “Damnitt.”

The memory of the green creature trying to hurt him makes him shake his head and he moves to stand but something pulls on his arm. Will falls forward slightly and sees the outline of someone under the water. He tries to yank his hand back but he’s held tighter and he hisses yanking his hand out before falling back onto the grass.

He suddenly gasps when the creature pops up out of the water again with just the top of its head visible and stares.

“I...I can’t.”

It reaches out a hand.

Will can’t resist the urge to touch and the feeling makes him warmer than the sun ever could. He lets out a long breath as the creature holds his hand tightly. “I…”

He looks around, still unsure if someone will come, and sees no one.

Where are Leanne and Hannibal?

Will lets out a long breath as he lets go of the creature’s hand. His heart is beating wildly in his chest, as he pulls his shirt up over his head.

This was crazy.

And dangerous.

But he didn’t feel scared.

The creature wouldn't let anything happen to him.

Will’s shaking as he jumps in the water and he gasps when he’s immediately pulled into the creature’s arms from behind. He shivers, leaning back against it, and closes his eyes.

No words are needed but Will almost hears them anyway.

I’m here.

He’s let go of and turns around expecting the creature to go.

It doesn’t.

Will stares openly at its face: The scales he’d seen before were all over in various shades of blue and the flared webbed arch around the back of its head. Its eyes are large and bright red, while its nose is barely a slit on its face, while even from here he can see its teeth are razor sharp. He remembers the way they felt on its skin. A long tail is moving behind the creature in the water, thin at the bottom but large on top. He can see tendrils all over the creature, not sure what they are but oddly wanting to find out.

Any sane person would scream and run away from seeing this monster fully.

He reaches out and puts his hand on the creature’s face.

It’s both warm and ice cold to the touch.

Will feels tears fall down his face.

Hi.

The creature grabs Will's hand and he lets himself get pulled through the water so fast his head hurts when they stop. He feels strangely light headed and moves to go to the surface to breathe.

His hand is still held even as he stares out at the water but the creature does not come up with him.

Will shivers when he feels a tendril touch his leg, shorts soaked to the skin, and wonders just what they're for.

He goes back underwater and the creature puts both its webbed hands on his face. Will can't seem to look away from the intensity of its gaze. He blinks and his vision turns red.

I don't know what you want from me.

The creature moves in closer, nails digging into Will's shoulders, and a sudden heat fills him as he's licked across the mouth with a very long tongue. He moans, shaking with need, and can hardly stop himself from pulling it closer.

Its growl makes Will suddenly tense up before it pulls him through the water again. Will has no idea where they're going but he doesn't care, the dizziness overwhelming, and before he can even blink he wakes up in his own bed.

He stares around the room, confused, and goes to stand just as the door opens.

"You're awake."

Hannibal frowns at him as carries in what looks like a sandwich and soup. He sets the tray down before putting his hand to Will's forehead.

"What...how did I get here?"

"We found you lying in the grass soaking wet. Leanne was...quite upset. I've given her a sedative. You've been asleep for a very long time, I was starting to get worried. Why were you wet, Will?"

Will shakes his head. "I...I was swimming. I…"

"I thought you were afraid to go in the water again," Hannibal says, grabbing the tray again and putting it over Will's lap.

"I...I was."

Hannibal stares at him. "Were you swimming alone?"

Will bites his bottom lip. "Um…"

"I saw the scratches on your shoulders, Will. There's no need to make up a lie."

“I...I wasn’t. We...nothing happened.”

“Hmm.”

“Hanni…”

He reaches for him and Hannibal takes his hand. “I’m aware that...this...us...will be strained for some time. If you wish to continue.”

“I’m fine,” Will lies, “I just…”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “Tell me what happened in the water.”

Will feels tears in his eyes. “I...I can’t.”

The disappointment in his eyes makes Will’s chest ache. “Why? Is this...person...that important to you?”

“No, it’s just…”

“You can trust me, Will,” he says, putting Will’s hand on his face, “...with anything.”

“Not this.”

Hannibal lets go of him and walks to the door without another word. A tear spills down Will’s cheek just before he turns back around. “With *anything*.”

And with that, he’s gone.

Will wipes his face, shaking his head, and stares at his shoulders one by one. There’s claw marks there, not very deep but obvious, and for once he doesn’t want to touch them.

He eats without much enjoyment after Hannibal’s gone, not even bothering to turn on the TV, and when he’s done lays down to stare at the wall in silence.

What happened after the creature’s kiss?

Had he passed out or something?

Will sighs and rolls onto his back to stare at the ceiling. It’s pristine white, no signs of age, and he wonders how often Hannibal has the place redone. Will he repaint when Will and his Mom are gone?

He sniffles.

“No,” he whispers, shaking his head as he stands on shaky legs.

This isn’t how today was going to end.

It’s nearing dark when he makes his way down the hall, a mess of emotions, and finds Hannibal in his office. He seems occupied by whatever he’s doing and Will stares at him for

far too long before he's noticed.

"Will."

He walks inside and closes the door leaning his back against it. "I don't want tonight to end like this."

Hannibal frowns. "If you'd rather not continue our...liason…"

Will locks the door and rushes over to him angrily. "Liason? Is that all this is? Just some good time summer going back and forth between mother and son while…"

Hannibal puts a finger over his lips. "There are many definitions of liaison, Mielasis," he whispers, "None of them are bad."

Will pushes his finger away. "Then what does it mean?"

"Love affair," Hannibal whispers, running his finger over Will's lips, "Elicit...sexual…..affair. There's not one of those meanings that I think are bad."

"Affair is bad," Will whispers, licking his lips, "Affair…"

"If this continues, Will," he says, smiling sadly, "Then it will *be* an affair. Your mother firmly believes I belong to her."

"Do you?"

"You know the answer to that, Will. Don't pretend not to know."

He bites his lip as he stares into Hannibal's eyes.

"I don't like hiding," he says, climbing up into his lap, "And I don't...like…sharing," he continues, "But...I don't want to stop."

Hannibal puts both hands on Will's cheeks and stares into his eyes.

"Neither do I."

Will kisses him softly, the taste only making him want more, and soon he's grinding down on Hannibal's lap as they make out. Hannibal kisses goes down his neck and teases his teeth against the marks the creature left making Will whimper.

"Your taste...I cannot get enough...never enough."

"Please."

He moans when Hannibal frees his cock, stroking as they continue, and Will nearly cries out as he spills into his hand. Hannibal continues to stroke as he falls forward, panting, and Will watches him like his fingers clean.

"I can't move."

“I wouldn’t want you to,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his temple, “Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I...you…”

“Don’t worry about me, Will.”

“No, I…I want to,” he says, trying to catch his breath, “I...please?”

“Whatever you desire, Mielasis.”

Will’s hands shake as he undoes Hannibal’s trousers, and slips his hand inside. Hannibal sighs, arching up to meet his touch, and Will kisses his neck softly before he begins. Hannibal groans with each flick of his wrist, his warm breath on brushing across Will’s cheek, and when he lifts his head he stares into his eyes.

“You’re so…”

Hannibal kisses him then, hard, and Will speeds up his strokes. His hand already aches but he doesn’t want to stop, can’t stop, and when he bites Hannibal’s tongue the quick spill in his palm makes him nearly come again. He pulls back, breathless, and licks his hand just like Hannibal.

It’s sweet, not at all like he’d heard, and once he starts Will cleans every last drop off.

He smiles at him. “Hungry?”

Will blushes. “It...I like it,” he whispers, “The taste of you.”

Hannibal kisses him again softly. “I know.”

“You…I…”

“Shhh.”

He turns Will on his lap and wraps his arms around him from behind. Will leans back into his arms and stares down at what Hannibal had been working on when he walked in.

It’s a drawing of him.

“Wow.”

“Do you like it?”

Will touches his hand to the paper. “Yeah, it’s...beautiful.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Just like the person I drew.”

“I’m not…”

“Do not try to say those words to me, Will. Not to me.”

Will sighs and leans against his chest. He's never seen himself look like this before, like...someone special.

"Can I have it?"

"When I've finished."

He runs his fingers over the pencil mouth, not smiling, and frowns. "Why am I not smiling?"

"Because you don't often smile and when you do, it's so...exquisite I want to keep it for myself and no one else."

Will blinks back tears. "I...I'm not...I don't want what you see when you look at me, but…"

Hannibal turns his cheek and stares at him intensely. "I see you, Will," he whispers, kissing him softly, "Just you."

Will feels tears on his cheeks as they kiss, turning in his arms again for more.

He's lost in their kisses, dizzy with desire, and when they pull apart he can hardly believe this is real.

"I...I wish we could be together like this all the time."

Hannibal smiles. "We will be, Will…just...be patient."

Will frowns. "I guess."

He pulls Will into a hug and presses his nose to Will's neck breathing in deeply.

"Your mother is asleep," he whispers, "May I...share the bed with you again tonight?"

Will pulls back to frown. "It's….I mean...she might look for you again."

"She will not," Hannibal promises, kissing him again, "I promise you."

"How can you…"

"Please, Will. May I?"

Will nods. "Yeah, I...I liked it last night."

Hannibal smiles. "Good. We can watch some horror films and sleep as we did last night. Do not worry, Leanne will not interrupt."

Will grins and gets up off his lap. "Am I getting you addicted to horror movies?"

"I am...learning to enjoy them."

Will laughs. "Sure."

“Go to the bedroom, Will. I will meet you there.”

He unlocks the door and steps outside to smile at him again. “I’m glad I came to see you again tonight.”

Hannibal smiles. “As am I.”

Will goes to his room, dresses down to nothing but his boxers, and climbs into bed. He scrolls through the movies and finds a run of the mill slasher just as Hannibal joins him still dressed but carrying clothes in his hands.

He laughs. “We’re gonna get caught if we keep doing this,” he jokes as Hannibal locks the door.

Hannibal smiles. “No, we won’t.”

Will watches Hannibal undress and fold every part of his suit down to the socks before climbing in bed beside him. His stomach flutters with happiness when he’s pulled into Hannibal’s arms.

“Ready?”

“Oh yes.”

They watch four movies, two slashers and two serial killers, until Will can hardly keep his eyes open. He lays his head against Hannibal’s chest and hears him singing that same song he remembers from the office.

“Mmm,” he sighs, “I like that song.”

Hannibal runs his fingers through Wil’s hair. “I will teach it to you soon.”

He smiles. “Promise?”

“I promise.”

Will falls asleep smiling.

Chapter 22

Will's woken up by Hannibal kissing his neck.

"Good morning," he sighs, pulling him closer.

"Good morning," Hannibal whispers, "Sleep well?"

"Mmm hmm."

Hannibal teases his teeth against Will's scratches and he moans.

"As did I. I wish…"

Will tenses up and gently pushes him back. "What do you wish?"

Hannibal frowns. "I wish I could fall asleep with you in my arms every night."

The words should make him happy, he knows that, but all it does is kill his good mood and he moves off the bed. "Yeah, well…"

Hannibal grabs his shoulder. "Will…"

"You should probably go get dressed. I'm not sure what you gave Leanne but it won't last all morning."

He leaves the bedroom with tears in his eyes, hating that he feels like this, and locks the door before sitting on the toilet seat.

This is how things are gonna have to be for a while, he knows that, but it doesn't make it hurt any less.

Will doesn't know how long he's there but eventually he gets up to brush his teeth and goes back to his bedroom to find it empty with the bed made. He gets dressed in swim trunks and tank top before grabbing his phone to head out toward the dining room.

Leanne is already there when he comes inside.

She looks half asleep as she holds out her hands to him.

"Come here, baby," she says, sounding oddly maternal.

Will frowns. "I'm not…"

"Oh, of course," she says, nodding, "I know how upset you must've been after all that. I...I can imagine."

He watches her closely and sees a strangely haunted look in her eyes.

“Can you?”

Her eyes widen for a moment and then she laughs in an obviously fake way.

“Well..you *know*...I just meant I’m sure it was scary. Who knows what that was trying to hurt you?”

Will frowns.

Leanne seems to be hiding something.

“Hannibal said it was a water snake.”

She blinks in surprise. “Did he? Well that must’ve been it,” she laughs, “Obviously that was it.”

“Mom…”

The door to the kitchen opens and they both turn to see Hannibal coming in with several plates in his hands along with a pitcher. “Breakfast is served. Strawberry pancakes with diced strawberries on the side. I’ve also made peanut butter syrup for Will and plain for Leanne. Also I have fresh squeezed orange juice.”

He sets the plate of pancakes between them and Leanne smiles at him.

“So good to me, Hanni…”

Hannibal smiles. “I know you haven’t been feeling well.”

Will’s stomach hurts as he picks up several pancakes and he drizzles them with peanut butter syrup before digging in. His phone dings and he looks at the text.

Sorry for being weird yesterday.

He stares at Bev’s text and feels immediate relief.

“...and I said fine, don't bother calling me back ever again!”

“Will?”

He looks up at Hannibal.

“What?”

“Are you alright? You looked upset.”

He texts back fast.

It’s ok.

“I’m fine.”

“Hanni, are you even listening?”

Hannibal sighs. “Of course, Leanne. Continue. Your friend was upset with you.”

“Yes!” she almost yells, “I told her it’s very important that I bond with my son this summer and that’s why I wasn’t answering her calls. All my stupid friends seemed to think that they were more important to me than anyone else and I honestly won’t miss her either. I’m fine with just my family.”

“Yes, their obvious jealousy seems determined to ruin any relationships you may have.”

Leanne nods. “Totally! They just didn’t get it. I fell in love, is that a crime? And now I have my baby boy back,” she says, smiling at Will, “Is that terrible that I *only* want to be around him?”

“But you haven't really…” Will starts to say but Hannibal cuts him off.

“They’re obviously jealous, Leanne. And to not care what you’ve been feeling unwell is just...rude.”

She clutches her chest. “I don’t know what I’d do without you, baby. You’re the light in my fucking life, you know? I…still can’t believe you’re all mine.”

Will takes more bites of his pancakes, feeling like he might throw up, and barely can stop himself from yelling across the table.

He isn’t yours!

He grabs the pitcher of juice and fills his glass fast guzzling it down in one swallow.

“Can I be excused? I’m gonna go for a swim.”

“Honey, you really should wait an hour before swimming after a meal. Right Hanni?”

“Actually, that’s a common myth. Swimming on full stomachs is not bad for you. Though I was planning on taking Will on the boat today.”

Will immediately brightens at the thought and smiles at him. “I...yeah, that might be…”

“So I’m not invited?”

They both look at her and Will’s good mood goes down immediately.

“Well, Leanne, you didn’t really enjoy yourself last time. Remember? You might end up falling into the water again and I’m not sure it’s safe.”

Leanne’s eyes widen and she laughs that same fake laugh Will heard earlier. “Oh no, you’re right Hanni. I should just...I’ll stay home. I can make lunch or do some laundry. I…I’ll catch up on the soaps I missed!”

Hannibal reaches across the table and pats her hand. “I’ve already made lunch for Will and myself this afternoon but you can make us dinner if you’d like. I think perhaps another nap would be good for you as well.”

She stares at him, eyes slowly drooping, and then sighs happily. “Yes, that...sounds good. Have a good time.”

He gets up from the table and kisses her forehead. “We will. Would you like me to take you to bed?”

“Yeah, I’m...feeling really tired.”

Will frowns. “Are you ok?”

Leanne smiles. “Yeah, baby, I’m fine. Have fun.”

He watches Hannibal practically carry her out of the dining room and feels concern for the first time. Why doesn’t Hannibal think it’s odd she’s sleeping all the time? And why doesn’t she either?

Will carries the dishes into the kitchen and cleans them off before putting them in the dishwasher. He’s about to turn it on when he sees a small unmarked bottle sitting against the back of the counter. The minute he goes to touch it Hannibal appears out of nowhere wrapping his arms around him from behind.

“She’s asleep,” he whispers, “I could hardly wait to be alone again. Are you terribly upset?”

He sighs and falls back against him. “No.”

“You seemed upset this morning.”

“I just...I don’t like this.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I know, Mielasis. I know.”

“Is she ok? I mean, she sleeps *a lot*.”

Hannibal turns Will in his arms and presses him up against the counter. “Your mother...she’s undergoing a change she’s not quite ready to admit. I don’t have the heart to say anything so I’m just letting her come to terms with it in her own time.”

Will frowns. “What do you mean?”

He kisses him softly. “It’s private, Will. Let’s not speak of it.”

“She’s not like...dying or anything though?”

“No, she’s just...older than she feels she is.”

“I’m still not sure what you mean.”

Hannibal smiles. “When it’s time, you’ll understand.”

Will laughs. “You’re the most cryptic person I’ve ever spoken to, you know that?”

“That’s not a bad thing?”

“No, it’s just...weird.”

“It’s fine to be weird, Will,” Hannibal says, brushing the curls from Will’s eyes.

“So you’ve told me.”

They kiss again, deeper this time, and Will digs his nails into Hannibal’s neck as he lifts him up on the counter. He’s filled with heat at every touch, every taste, and aching with desire he can barely understand when Hannibal pulls back staring at him with eyes that look so red Will’s sure it’s not an illusion.

“We should go,” he says, his voice thick and almost a growl, “There’s plenty of daylight left.”

Will touches his face. “I don’t want to go, let’s just…”

Hannibal kisses his forehead and Will hates that his immediate thought is him doing the same to Leanne not very long ago.

“We can touch just the same on the boat, Will. I promise.”

Will nods and jumps down as Hannibal turns away. He feels so hot he almost wants to jump into the water but he’s torn with the idea that the blue finned creature might see him.

Hannibal grabs their lunch from the fridge before he pulls Will out the door so fast he barely has enough time to think. Will only realizes that coming on the water like this might be an awful idea when they’re already speeding away from the dock.

His creature might see them like this, just like when it followed Will to Molly’s house, and the worry that fills him makes his stomach hurt.

Did he not want the creature to know about Hannibal?

Did it already know?

Will is staring out at the water as they speed by, hoping to not see the familiar fin, and when they finally stop near the private area they did before he’s still looking.

“Will, is everything all right?”

He shakes himself and forces a smile when he turns. “Sorry I was just...thinking.”

Hannibal smiles as he hands Will a fishing pole.

“About?”

“This,” he says, “I...I like this.”

Hannibal’s hand brushes Will’s just before he presses a kiss to his cheek. “I like this as well. Though I like...other things.”

Will licks his lips. “We don’t really have to go fishing.”

“Leanne will wonder what we were doing out here if we don’t.”

He frowns, putting the lure on the end of his hook. “I guess.”

“Can you show me how to cast the line again, Will? I’ve forgotten.”

Will smiles and sets his pole down, coming behind Hannibal and wrapping his arms around him.

“You got the lure on, that’s good. Now you just,” he pulled back and let the line go into the water, “Let it dangle and wait. You’ll catch something.”

Hannibal smiles at him. “I think I already have.”

He laughs and kisses Hannibal. “I knew you couldn’t have forgotten that fast.”

“Yet you helped me anyway.”

“Always.”

Hannibal kisses him again and Will lets go of the pole to put both hands on his face. He feels warm, almost hot, and Will can’t get enough of him. He pulls back, knowing it’ll look strange if it doesn’t, and smiles.

“Now I have to cast mine or someone might come around and see.”

“No one can see us here.”

Will turns away from him and picks up his pole. “I have to cast it anyway cuz one of us has to catch something.”

Hannibal grabs Will from behind and kisses his neck. “True, but I do have the car and your mother cares very little about fish.”

“You just said…”

Hannibal squeezes him tight. “Cast your line, Will. If we catch a fish, we catch a fish. I could care less.”

Will pulls back and lets his line fly, feeling Hannibal’s hardness against his ass. He wiggles back and feels Hannibal’s grip tighten as his lure hits the water.

“Will…”

He turns and kisses him. “What’s wrong, Dr. Lecter? Having trouble?”

Hannibal turns him in his arms before kissing him again, leading Will backward till he hits the edge of the nearest chair. He falls to his knees, freeing Will’s cock from his swim trunks, and taking him in past his lips without words.

Will bites his lip, gripping Hannibal’s hair, and barely has time to enjoy before his release comes. Hannibal growls as he swallows, sucking hard as Will spills inside his mouth, and when he lifts his head up Will can’t help but kiss him.

He feels his body ache as Hannibal pulls him down to the boat’s floor, and the he moans as Hannibal ruts against his body like he can do nothing else spilling down Will’s thigh as his trunks tangle at his ankles.

Hannibal holds him tightly after, licking Will’s exposed belly, and he feels drained in the best way.

“Fuck,” he sighs, pulling on Hannibal’s hair, “God, don’t...don’t stop.”

Hannibal bites marks on Will’s lower belly, making him whimper, and he knows he’s already come but feels like this is even better. He wants to be marked by him, needs it, and when Hannibal finally looks up Will’s so hot he can feel sweat everywhere even down his back.

He stares at him, chest aching, and smiles.

“This is the best fishing trip I’ve ever been on.”

Hannibal grins and moves up to kiss him. “Yes, I agree.”

They lay there, basking in the afterglow, until their polls start to wobble and Will ends up catching a fish. He pulls up his trunks as he brings the catch in, and recasts just in time to see Hannibal doing the same.

“At least we have two.”

Hannibal smiles.

“It was a slow day.”

Will’s face hurts; he's smiling so much. “A *very* slow day.”

They have lunch just after one, sandwiches that are surprisingly not peanut butter but some kind of beef, and Will takes a picture of the boat’s edge to send to Bev.

Fishing trip on the boat today. No mom.

bow chika wow wow

=D

Hannibal pulls out some sort of blanket he's kept hidden all this time just after lunch and they lay on the floor again staring up at the sky. Will feels better than he has in days being so close to the water with him, and he lays on Hannibal's chest as they stare at clouds.

"I used to do this with my sister," Hannibal says suddenly, making Will frown.

"Looking at clouds?"

Hannibal holds Will's hand. "Yes, we...would try to find things in them. I remember her being very creative."

Will's chest aches suddenly and he clutches him closer. "I'm sorry that...you know...they died."

"I know, Mielasis. I wish you could've known them."

"Hannibal…"

"They were taken from me by people who hated us for who we were," Hannibal continues, his voice sounding thick with emotion, "And…it fueled much of my life after that."

"Did they find them? The...people?"

"I found them, yes."

The rest of that sentence goes unsaid and Will lifts his head to look at him. "Good."

Hannibal touches his cheek. "You are...perfect."

Will blushes. "No, I'm not. You're the one who---"

The boat suddenly wobbles and Will freezes.

Oh no.

He stands up, scared, and looks out at the water.

The green fin that he sees makes him ice cold.

No.

"Will, what's…"

The boat is knocked into again and they wobble even more.

"No," he hears Hannibal growl.

"Hannib---"

Before Will can even finish Hannibal jumps into the water with his clothes on. Will nearly screams in shock, terrified, as he watches him go under.

“HANNIBAL!”

There’s little movement he can see in this secluded area, and Will’s hand shifts as he grips the boat’s edge in terror.

“No, no, no!”

What if the green fin hurts Hannibal?

What if it kills him?

Will growls in frustration, his teeth big in his mouth, and after no movement on the surface does the only thing he can think of.

Jump.

He hits the water fast and looks around for either of them but sees no one. Will screams, the fear rising, and takes off fast as he scans the water hoping to see one of them. Will’s got tears running down his face as he swims, and for the first time he wishes his blue fin was here.

Please. I need you..

Will rises to the surface, sobbing, and stares out at the water.

They shouldn’t have come.

He turns to head in the other direction when suddenly he hears a splash.

“Will!”

Will rushes to Hannibal, wrapping his arms around him, and kisses hard. He rubs his cheeks against Hannibal’s and whimpers hugging him tightly. “I thought you were gone, I thought…”

“Shh…”

“You didn’t come back up,” Will sobs, “You…”

“Whoever it was is long gone I promise you,” Hannibal purrs, “I’m quite unscathed. I’m sorry I took so long to return.”

“You...how are you so fast?”

“I’ve been swimming a long time.”

Will pulls back and laughs as tears fall down his face. “That’s not an answer but I don’t care,” he sighs, “You’re alive.”

Hannibal smiles. “I’m fine, Mielasis. Just fine.”

They kiss again, slow now, and Will can't help but want to taste all of him. He's not sure how long they kiss, or even if anyone sees, but he couldn't care less.

Hannibal is alive.

The green fin ran off.

They're together again.

Hannibal pulls away after a while, touches his face, and sighs. "Let's not let this ruin our day. Yes?"

Will nods.

They swim back to the boat and lay down on the blanket again even closer now. Will feels an odd urge to mark Hannibal as they kiss again, biting down on his neck, and Hannibal growls holding him closer.

"Will...we…your mother…"

Will lifts his head and smiles. "You'll just have to wear high collars till it heals."

Hannibal smiles and kisses his face. "I suppose so."

Will points to his own neck. "How am I supposed to explain this?"

"A fish bit you."

He laughs. "They must've gotten you too."

"Yes, it was...quite frightening."

They lay on the boat's floor for longer after that, and as the sun goes down Will's loathe to leave. This has been his favorite day so far since he got here, even with the green fin attack, and he hates that he's gonna have to go back.

"I don't want to go."

"I know, Mielasis."

He sighs and climbs into the chair beside Hannibal's, staring out at the water.

"Thank you for today," he says, before Hannibal starts the boat, "I...just thank you."

Hannibal takes his hand and squeezes. "No, Will, thank *you.*"

They stare at each other silently for way too long before he starts the boat and heads back to the house.

Will feels at home in the water, and the house is starting to feel like a punishment.

This is both the worst and best summer of his life.

He lays back and closes his eyes, smelling the water in the air.

All he can hope is that it gets better from here.

Chapter 23

Will recognizes the smell of pizza as they walk into the house and they kiss once quickly. "I'll put the fish in the fridge," Will says, smiling.

"I can--"

He shakes his head. "It's ok, go take a shower."

Hannibal touches his cheek. "I wish you could join me," he whispers.

Will sighs. "Hannibal, *go* now before she comes in here and sees that mark on your neck."

Hannibal disappears down the hall and Will walks into the dining room just in time to see Leanne surrounded by pizza boxes. He puts a hand over the bite mark on his neck. "Um…"

"Don't tell him, honey," she says, frowning, "Please?"

Will nods and rushes past her into the kitchen.

He puts the fish into the fridge for now, he'll get them ready later, and stares at the door.

Leanne really thinks that Hannibal won't notice she bought pizza?

Will shakes his head just as she rushes past him carrying the boxes. He makes a run for it in the opposite direction to his bedroom.

There's very few shirts he can wear that'll cover up his hickey but he finds an expensive hoodie Hannibal got him that does just fine. He pulls on some shorts and goes out into the hall just in time to see Hannibal come out of the shower in nothing but a towel.

He stares openly and licks his lips.

"Will…"

"Can't we just...put some NyQuil in her sweet tea or something?"

Hannibal smiles and kisses him softly. "No," he whispers, "Now go. I will see you at dinner."

He sighs and watches him go, warm all over.

This was torture.

Will finds Leanne setting up the meal she "made" and sits down.

"Did you at least dirty up some dishes to make it look like you made this?"

She smirks. "What do you take me for, honey? Of course I did."

Will frowns. “It’s dishonest.”

“Honey,” she sighs, sitting down next to him. “What was I supposed to do? He makes ninety nine percent of the things I eat! Was I just supposed to fuck up the best thing that’s ever happened to me?”

Yes, he wants to say.

“I guess not,” is what he says instead.

Leanne pulls him into a hug and sighs. “My sweetheart,” she says, You…” she laughs, “...you smell like Hannibal! I think you’re spending way too much time with him.”

Will blushes. “Yeah,” he says, forcing out a laugh, “I guess so!”

Leanne laughs and kisses his cheek. “You need to go find some pretty girl who…”

“..or a pretty boy,” he says, making her pause.

“Or a pretty boy,” she says, smiling, “And have some fun.”

“The last time I tried that someone died,” he jokes.

Leanne’s face falls. “Will, that wasn’t funny.”

Will frowns. “I was just--”

The door opens behind them and they both turn in time to see Hannibal enter the room. He’s wearing a gray suit, way too hot for the weather like always, and a blue tie. His smirk as he sees what’s on the table makes Will smile again.

“I see you ordered out,” he says, walking across the dining room, “Which is fine, but Will is a growing boy. He should be having healthy food.”

Leanne gives Will a dirty look as she stands up and walks around the table to Hannibal’s other side. “I made this, Hannibal. I didn’t--”

Hannibal lifts the edge of one of the pizzas up and removes a piece of cardboard underneath.

“I wasn’t aware I had,” he turns it over, “Bryan’s Pizza Palace brand cardboard circles in my kitchen.”

Leanne turns beet red. “I was tired, Hannibal. I’ve been sick.”

“Yes, I know. Which is why I’m giving you the benefit of the doubt. There was no reason to lie, Leanne. You’re a grown woman.”

She looks on the verge of tears as Will attempts to take two pieces of pizza only for Leanne to suddenly yank the whole thing off the table. It crashes to the ground. “THERE? HAPPY NOW MISTER PERFECT?”

Hannibal glares at her. “Are you done?”

“I SPENT FIFTY DOLLARS GETTING THOSE HERE AND YOU JUST TREAT ME LIKE---”

He stands up from the table. “Will and I are going out to dinner. You’re more than welcome to eat off the floor. Come, Will.”

Leanne suddenly bursts into tears and tries to throw herself at Hannibal. “Wait! I can make something! I…”

Hannibal ignores her and Will hurries after him outside to the car.

They don’t talk until they’ve pulled away from the house.

“You were...a little…harsh, don’t you think?”

“No,” Hannibal all but growls, “That was a pathetic display worthy of a child. If she thought I’d be so easily lied to…”

Will takes his hand and Hannibal relaxes almost immediately.

“I think...she’s just...I dunno,” he mumbles, “I really don’t know her all that well but Dad always said she cared mostly about herself. She thinks of you like this prize to be won. I think she’ll do just about anything to keep you.”

Hannibal smiles and kisses Will’s hand. “She’s never had me.”

Will feels warm all over at his words and smiles back. “No?”

“Not at all.”

He lays his head on Hannibal’s shoulder. “Good.”

“No sympathy for Leanne now?”

Will pushes away the memory of the look on Leanne’s face as they left. “Nope.”

They drive in near silence after that, though occasionally Will’s stomach growls, and Hannibal hums that song Will likes. He expects them to pull into the shopping center but they end up driving right past it.

“Where are we going?”

“Somewhere special.”

Will smiles as Hannibal calls out, “Call Mario,” into the car.

A man’s voice answers in what sounds like Italian and Will’s whole body heats up when Hannibal answers back. He knew Hannibal had to probably speak a few languages but

hearing it is another story. The man, who Will guesses is Mario, and Hannibal go back and forth for what feels like forever until the call ends.

“Who was that?”

“A friend. He’s going to make us dinner.”

He frowns and stares down at his clothes. “Um….I’m not really wearing something that would fit for a fancy restaurant.”

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “Don’t worry. I have it all settled.”

“If you say so,” Will mumbles, staring out the window, “I just...don’t want to look weird in front of your fancy friends or something.”

“You won’t, I promise.”

The phone rings six more times after Hannibal calls Mario.

All calls from Leanne.

Hannibal ignores them and instead asks Will a question.

“Did your father read stories to you when you were young?”

“Yeah,” Will says, confused, “I mean, didn’t everyone’s parents read them stories?”

“I suppose,” Hannibal says softly, “Though the stories my father would tell me were all handed down through generations. He didn’t read them out of a book.”

Will can almost feel how sad he is when he speaks. “Did you have a favorite?”

He smiles but doesn’t look at Will. “Many, though there is one that I hope to someday tell my own children.”

“You want kids?”

“Oh yes,” Hannibal says, sneaking a glance at Will as they stop at a light, “Don’t you?”

Will frowns. “I guess so?”

Hannibal’s face falls. “You’ve never thought of it?”

“No, I just...I’m sixteen, you know? It’s not like I’m gonna become a dad this summer, right?”

He looks away from him. “I suppose not.”

“But I mean, maybe someday? I’d adopt or have a surrogate if…”

It's weird to think about this thing with Hannibal going on further than the summer. Will suddenly thinks about Hannibal holding a baby in his arms and the warmth that fills him is almost too hot. He grabs his arm just as the light turns green.

"I do," he says, feeling the words in his very bones, "I do want kids."

Hannibal smiles. "I hope that---"

A loud honk behind them makes him glare back for a moment. "C'mon," Will says, grabbing his hand, "Let's go."

His anger fades and he smiles at Will as cars drive around them honking angrily. "Of course."

Will listens as he hums that song again and hums along a little, though he's sure he messes it up Hannibal still smiles. "You're remembering."

"A little."

"I'll teach it to you soon," he promises, "When you're ready."

"I'm not ready yet?"

"Soon," he says, "Very soon."

"It's just a song," Will mumbles, looking out the window again, "I don't…"

"Will…"

He suddenly feels like he wants to cry.

"Will, look at me."

"Just keep driving, Hannibal."

"All right," Hannibal sighs, "Though I will tell you that story I mentioned earlier. The one I want to tell my children."

He doesn't look at him. "Go ahead, I don't care."

The words make Will feel bad but he doesn't take them back.

"There was once a lonely monster who lived in the water."

Will blinks.

What?

"The monster was alone for a very long time, almost too long, and it began to get sad that it would be alone forever. The humans were afraid of the monster, you see, and did not want to understand him."

“Hannibal, I…”

He takes Will’s hand and squeezes.

“Then one day the monster sees a man get thrown into the water. He dives down, hoping to save him, but the moment they touch the man begins to change. His skin turns color and teeth get sharper. He even opens his eyes and they match the monster’s own. The monster knows then that he is not alone anymore and never will be again.”

Will smiles. “Kinda deep for a kid's story, isn’t it?”

“I don’t think so. It’s...uplifting. The lonely monster is not alone at the end. It teaches that we all have someone waiting for us.”

“I guess,” Will says, still smiling, “Was the guy already a monster or did he become a monster *because* they touched?”

“What do you think?”

Will laughs. “I don’t know! It’s your story.”

Hannibal turns to pull up to a fancy building that Will can tell screams money. The whole thing is silver and the name at the top is “M.”

“I think maybe it’s a little bit of both,” he says, frowning suddenly, “I mean, maybe he was a monster all along but he refused to let himself be so the touching was...a catalyst. The monster wasn’t the only one who was lonely.”

They park and Hannibal turns to Will.

“Yes,” he whispers, touching Will’s cheek, “I’m sure that’s quite true.”

Will undoes his seatbelt and leans in to kiss him. He can’t help himself, the need is suddenly so great, and Hannibal’s hand comes to the back of his neck. He sighs and Hannibal deepens the kiss, licking his teeth and making Will shudder.

They pull back and stare at each other. “I will return.”

He nods.

The car feels empty when Hannibal is gone, though his scent lingers, and Will notices just how secluded this fancy “M” restaurant is. There’s no other businesses around them, and the cars in the parking lot are all just as fancy as Hannibal’s.

He frowns.

Has Hannibal taken Leanne here?

The thought makes him wish he was wearing something else.

Will pulls out his phone and texts Bev.

Rich people are weird.

Is this a boyfriend moment?

He smiles.

He's not my boyfriend.

The words actually don't feel like a lie. Hannibal isn't his boyfriend, he's more than that. Will pushes aside thoughts of his creature in the water.

There's no need to think about it now.

He's with Hannibal.

Sure he isn't.

Will goes to answer her just as the driver's side door opens and Hannibal returns with a large bag. The smell of meat makes Will's mouth water as he hands it over to him.

"Hold this please," he says, "We're going to take a drive."

Will puts his phone away and takes the bag, opening to look inside. There looks like several containers all sleek black that he can't see inside.

"What's for dinner?"

"You'll see."

They pull out of the parking lot and drive another fifteen minutes away to the parking lot of a coffee shop. Hannibal parks but leaves the air conditioning on as he turns to Will.

"You can open it now."

There's four containers, all the kind you hold full meals in, and when Will opens the first his mouth waters.

It's fish, cut into strips, and smells like lemon. The fish is surrounded by fancy potatoes and vegetables.

"Is this one mine?"

"Yes."

"I don't have a…"

Hannibal reaches into the bag and pulls out actual metal utensils that he hands to Will.

"Mario did not wish to part with them but…"

Will smiles. “Does this place not normally do takeout?”

“No,” Hannibal says, “They let clientele take food home but not in this way. He made an exception for me.”

Will digs in immediately and moans at the taste. “Oh god, this is good.”

Hannibal pulls out another container and he can smell it’s some sort of beef.

“You need healthy meals, Will. Healthy food can be good if cooked properly.”

Will stabs a potato with his fork and holds it up. “How much did this cost?”

“I’m not at liberty to say.”

He smiles. “You just don’t want to.”

Hannibal looks away, still smiling. “Perhaps.”

They end up sharing bits of each other’s food halfway through, taking turns feeding from their forks, and by the time the two containers are empty Will’s warm all over.

“Hanni--”

Hannibal opens up another container and hands it to Will.

It’s strawberry shortcake drizzled with what smells like peanut butter.

“*Oh.*”

He’s suddenly starving as he takes it, not even bothering with the fork, and before Will realizes the whole thing is empty and Hannibal is staring at him openly.

“Um…”

“Would you like more?”

Will’s belly feels like it needs more, but he blushes and looks away. “No, I’m good. I didn’t realize I was so hungry.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “You can have more, Will. I don’t need mine.”

“I thought...you wanted me to eat healthy.”

He brushes his cheek against Will’s and whispers in his ear. “I had this made especially for you, Mielasis. A bit of indulgence is not a bad thing.”

Will kisses him softly. “How about a lot?”

Hannibal smiles. “After.”

He hands Will his own cake, and while Will feels suddenly starved enough to eat the whole thing he can't help but share. He brings the fork to Hannibal's mouth and they take turns until the whole thing is gone.

"I think I've had my favorite meals so far this summer in cars with you," Will laughs, tossing the containers into the bag before climbing over the console to Hannibal's lap.

"As have I."

They make out a little, Will can't help but 'indulge,' and soon Will's aching for more but just settles in Hannibal's lap.

Hannibal's phone rings again and he sees Leanne's name pop up.

"She's gotta be going out of her mind."

He feels Hannibal's hand touch down his back.

"I care very little about her at the moment."

Will looks up at him and smiles.

"What would you have done if I hadn't shown up, huh? Been stuck with her forever?"

Hannibal touches his cheek. "I knew more about you than I did her before you arrived, Will. Your mother may have abandoned you at infancy but she knew where you were and what you were doing. The parental instinct is...a powerful thing."

Will frowns. "She doesn't care about me."

"I think…"

He looks away. "She doesn't. I'm some sort of prize, just like you."

Hannibal pulls him in closer and he sighs.

"You are indeed prizeworthy, Mielasis. A prize that others just can't see like I can."

Will thinks of the creature again, hating that he can't stop, and his teeth feel heavy in his mouth.

"I know."

They linger in the parking lot for far too long and he's grateful for the tinted windows. Hannibal throws the containers out and they move to their seats again.

The fun is over.

The drive back is solemn, like being forced back to a punishment he knows he can't avoid, and when they pull up to the house Leanne is sitting outside.

“Stay in the car.”

“H--”

Hannibal’s skin looks blue and his eyes are a little red even in the dark.

Will frowns.

He can’t blame the sun this time.

“Okay,” he says.

Hannibal leaves the car and walks to Leanne who bursts into tears. Their voices are muffled but when he touches her face just like he’s done many times to Will it makes Will’s blood run cold.

He’s not yours.

He’s mine.

The words feel right in his own head but Leanne presses her mouth to Hannibal’s, who only gently pushes her away as they walk into the house.

Will blinks back tears.

He shouldn’t be this upset over a face touch and a kiss.

Hannibal has to keep this up, he knows that, but still it feels wrong.

Will gets out of the car, he can’t help himself, and goes into the house.

He can’t hear Leanne’s sobs as he stands in the doorway to take off his shoes.

“I love you!” she says, “I need you! I…!”

Will’s vision turns red as he stands there listening, and he hears nothing come from Hannibal in return.

The sense of satisfaction that brings is immediate.

He doesn’t move for a long time, standing against the door, and he can almost smell Hannibal coming back down the hall.

Hannibal frowns when he sees him.

“Will…”

Will launches himself at him, almost growling, and soon they fall onto the couch.

He needs to touch him, can’t stop, and Hannibal seems to need the same.

It’s dangerous to do this here, but soon Hannibal’s slowly stroking their cocks together as kisses drown out the moans that follow. Will sucks hard on the mark he’s already left on Hannibal’s neck and sighs.

Hannibal hums that song Will loves so much, and they lay there for far too long.

“I wish she’d just...never wake up.”

The confession should make Will feel terrible but it’s the truth.

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I know.”

They can’t stay the night together tonight, he knows that, and when they stop at Will’s door it feels like too soon.

“Would you like to take a swim tomorrow morning?”

Will smiles. “Yeah, that’s...yeah.”

Hannibal kisses him again softly. “Excellent,” he whispers, touching his cheek just like he did Leanne’s not too long ago, “Goodnight Will.”

“Goodnight.”

Will dumps his clothes into the hamper before falling into bed with a sigh.

It’s only been a few days since they started all this and every time they’re apart he feels worse than the last.

This is gonna be hell.

But it’ll be worth it.

He knows it will.

Chapter 24

“Wake up, Mielasis.”

The whisper comes in the dark and Will opens his eyes to see Hannibal staring down at him in the dark. “Hannibal?”

“It’s time for our swim.”

He looks out the window. “It’s still dark outside.”

The bed suddenly dips and Hannibal’s arms come around him. He leans back into the embrace, eyes closing, and sighs. “Which is the best time for a swim, Will. The water will wake you, I promise.”

Will groans. “Normal people swim when there’s sun outside.”

Hannibal kisses the mark on his neck. “Do you truly wish to be normal?”

He feels an odd tinge at the words. “Maybe a little.”

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek and kisses him softly in the dark. “Then let me show you why it’s best to remain weird. Come now.”

He gets up off the bed and Hannibal hands him a pair of swim trunks before he can even think to look for them. Will smiles. “You’ve been busy.”

“Yes.”

Will pauses with the trunks in his hand. “I should ask you to turn around.”

“Do you want me to?”

“You probably can’t see much in the dark anyway.”

“I have excellent night vision.”

He feels warm all over as he peels down his pajama pants. “I’ll take my chances.”

Will can feel Hannibal’s eyes on him as he changes into the trunks and wiggles a little as he pulls them up. Hannibal wraps his arms around him again once he’s got the trunks on and Will can feel his hardness against him.

“Perhaps...swimming is not needed this morning.”

“Nope,” Will laughs, pulling away, “You woke me up at,” he picks up his phone, “Four in the morning. We’re swimming.”

“Will…”

He walks out into the darkness, glad for his weird new monster night vision, and quickly rushes himself down the hallway. The sound of Leanne snoring almost makes him feel bad until Hannibal picks him up and turns him around in his arms.

“Not quite fast enough.”

Will grins and kisses him. “You gonna find me in the dark?”

“Like you once said to me once,” Hannibal whispers, smiling, “I think I could find you anywhere.”

“Let’s see.”

He takes off out the door quietly but starts to run when he gets to the grass. The water is cool, but like always Will finds it doesn't bother him even a little.

His night vision makes it easier for him to see through the dark underwater and he uses his speed to get as far away as possible before coming up for air he doesn’t need. The moon is small tonight but there’s enough of it he can see a bit far out.

There’s no one else on the water.

Will loves it here.

He goes back under again only to be grabbed and turned for a kiss he doesn’t expect. Will wraps his arms around Hannibal, knowing it’s him even in the darkness, and the warmth he usually feels turns hot.

They’re down there for far too long and Will swims up to the surface not breaking the kiss as he moves them against the edge of the lake. He hears Hannibal’s groan and almost bites down on his tongue, instead pulling back to let him breathe. They’re both humming as they part, shaking, and Hannibal touches his face again.

“Perfect.”

“I’m not.”

“Yes, you are.”

Will blushes. “You found me.”

“I told you I would.”

“Why did you want to come out this early?”

Hannibal puts both hands on Will’s cheeks. “It's quiet,” he whispers, kissing him again, “And no one is out making noise to disrupt us.”

“It’s easier to hide,” Will says, hating that it makes his stomach hurt.

“No,” Hannibal purrs, pressing their foreheads together, “It’s easier to be alone.”

Will sighs. “Hannibal, I---”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “Can you find me, Will? If I swim off in the dark?”

Will’s heart beats fast in his chest. “Yes.”

“Let’s see.”

Hannibal is gone before Will can even register what he’s about to do, and Will’s whole body thrums as he follows. There’s a pull again that seems to show him the way, and before long he stops at the entrance to the cave.

Will’s immediate reaction is terror.

He goes through the small entrance and comes out in a rush almost coughing as he finds Hannibal leaning against the glittering illuminated rocks inside.

“What are you doing in here?!?” he yells, grabbing his arm, “We can’t stay in here it’s---not safe!”

Hannibal turns Will against the rocks, trapping his arms. “This is the safest place we could possibly be,” he purrs, kissing Will’s neck, “No one can find us.”

Will moans and shakes his head. “No, we have to…go. It’s not...”

“Shh…”

He nips at Will’s neck just as he moves his hand down Will’s chest. Will looks over his shoulder, worried that the blue fin creature will find them there, and when Hannibal’s hand is close to touching him he pushes him back hard. “NO!”

“Will, what’s---”

Will feels like he might cry. “Not here,” he says, his voice shaking, “Please.”

Hannibal frowns. “Why?”

“Just...please?”

He reaches out to touch Will’s face. “Is this...where you meet him?”

Will opens his mouth to answer only for Hannibal to take off under the water. He lets out a sob, not sure what he’s going to do, and then follows. Hannibal is not waiting for him outside like he hoped, so Will swims toward home. He keeps feeling like his creature will come out any minute, angry at Hannibal being in their place, and he doesn’t know what he’ll do if that happens either.

He's close to the house when he comes up out of the water, looking around, but Hannibal isn't there either.

Will tries to feel for the weird pull he let guide him earlier, and when he feels it he heads off in the complete opposite direction only for something to ram into him. He knows immediately it's the creature, *his* creature, and he worries that Hannibal's been hurt. The creature digs its nails into his sides before it drags him back just where he left.

He feels his body change and lashes out with his claws, growling as they resurface again.

"WHERE IS HE?" he yells, growling, "Where…"

The creature puts two webbed hands on Will's face and he lets out a sob.
"Where...what...did…"

It licks Will's cheek, the rough feel making him moan, and his body betrays him.

"Please," he whimpers, "Pl…"

The creature growls, almost shaking him.

"I don't…"

He's confused when it lets go and before Will can even think to follow it's gone.

Will covers his mouth with his hands, shaking his head, and tries to feel for Hannibal again.

But nothing comes.

He goes under the water and screams.

Is he hurt?

Did it kill him?

Will swims for the house, barely able to see even with his night vision, and when he comes out of the water he collapses on the grass in tears.

"H...h…"

"Will!"

The loud whisper makes him look up and Hannibal comes running to take Will into his arms.

"What's happened?"

He kisses him hard, desperate, and Hannibal lifts him up easily.

Hannibal is safe.

He's safe.

Mine.

Will is lost in his need and barely notices that they change locations. Hannibal sets him on a table in what seems to be the garage, his whole body hot as he stares at him.

“Wh…”

“Shh.”

He peels down Will’s swim trunks and begins to lick at his cock, making Will groan.

“H...oh god... we…”

Hannibal seems to be able to touch him everywhere, every lick and twirl of his tongue making Will wild for more, and when he begins to suck Will has to cover his own mouth to muffle his moans. He lifts Will up to the edge of the table, pressing two fingers in as he continues, and Will lets his hand fall.

“Harder,” he sighs, “Please...harder…”

He sucks harder, longer, drilling his fingers into Will who whimpers just before he spills coming so hard he’s lightheaded. Hannibal keeps on sucking, staring up at Will with those eyes that seem so red, and when he pulls his mouth off he kisses Will’s breath away.

Will slips a hand in past his waistband and strokes as they kiss, growling as he moves in closer. Hannibal pulls back, panting for breath, and touches his face with both hands.

“Will…”

“I want to taste you,” Will sighs, “I...please?”

He moves back from the table and Will jumps down, pulling up his boxers just before he kneels. Hannibal makes no move to stop him as he pulls down his swimsuit and begins to lick off droplets of water that cling to his skin. He moans, desire hot in his belly, and growls just before taking what he needs.

Hannibal’s hands come to his hair and he growls, licking up and down Hannibal’s hardness.

“Take your time, Mielasis,” he moans, “Do not...rush.”

Will slows down, feeling like he might come again he’s so hot, and swirls his tongue around Hannibal’s cock in ways he’s sure aren’t human. Hannibal doesn’t seem to care, groaning as he grips Will’s hair, and Will can’t help but take him into his mouth before he’s ready.

“W…”

He’s desperate to taste him, needs it, and when he stares up at him he can see Hannibal fighting not to come already. Will growls, sucking harder, and feels him tense up just before grazing his teeth against his hardness.

Hannibal comes with a groan, pulling Will's hair hard, and begins to fuck Will's mouth as he does.

Will touches himself as he almost chokes, lost in desire, and comes again in his own hand. He pulls his mouth off and Hannibal touches his face.

"Will...I…"

He stands on shaky legs and smashes his mouth to Hannibal's hard. Hannibal growls and the taste of their come mixes as their tongues meet. Will feels like he might pass out but doesn't want to stop, so hot he's sweating as they continue. Hannibal pulls back after what feels like not long enough, and stares at him in wonder.

"You are...everything I knew you would be."

"I don't understand," Will whispers, "I…"

"Shh…"

Will all but collapses in his arms, worn out, and he all but purrs when Hannibal picks him up again. He lays his head on Hannibal's shoulder as they walk into the house, the sun starting to come in through the windows, and they walk into the bathroom. Will can barely keep his eyes open as Hannibal starts the water, and when he gets Will out of his trunks he does the same to himself.

"I...I've had dreams like this," Will whispers, almost laughing.

"As have I."

He feels like crying when Hannibal bathes him under the spray, shaking so much he can hardly breathe, and kisses him all the while.

"I...I want to...you…"

"Another time, Mielasis," Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, "Another time."

Will watches him bathe himself after, every water droplet on his skin making Will's teeth feel heavy, and he all but jumps into Hannibal's arms when they get out of the shower.

He carries WIll back to his room and tucks him back into bed.

"Sleep well, Mielasis."

"Stay?"

Hannibal frowns. "I cannot. Go back to sleep, Will."

Will passes out almost instantly after he's told, and wakes up to Leanne sitting on his bed. He blinks, confused, especially since she's not looking at him.

“Mom?”

She doesn’t answer or look at Will.

He sits up, reaches out, and she leaves without a word.

Will rubs his eyes.

Maybe he was still dreaming?

He lays back down with a sigh.

It had to be a dream.

Will closes his eyes again and wakes to a phone alarm he doesn’t remember setting. He turns it off and sees messages from Bev.

Lunch today?

Sure.

You’re driving.

Will laughs. *Where are we going?*

Anywhere but here.

Sounds good to me.

He gets dressed fast, still smiling, and heads for the dining room. The sound of voices makes him pause.

“I saw marks on his neck,” Leanne says.

“And? I’m not sure why that’s any of our business.”

“Well he’s fucking someone, obviously,” she mumbles, “And it *is* my business to know who. He’s my little boy, Hannibal.”

“He’s a young man, Leanne, not a boy.”

“He’s sixteen.”

“Again, not a child.”

A loud bang makes Will’s blood run cold. “Why do you care if I try to find out who it is?”

“I do not,” Hannibal says coldly, “But I believe it is an invasion of Will’s privacy.”

Leanne laughs. “Are you worried I’ll find out who it is?”

“I don’t like the implication.”

“Don’t you?”

Will realizes he didn’t wear a shirt to cover up his hickey and frowns.

Did it matter now?

“I will *not* stand by and have you accuse me of something I have not done.”

Leanne laughs. “You haven’t touched me in days. You’re obviously getting it from someone, and it…”

The sound of choking makes Will hurry to open the door. He pauses when he sees Leanne staring straight ahead, eyes glazed over, and tears running down her face.

Hannibal smiles at him. “Good morning, Will.”

Will looks at Leanne. “Um...is everything ok?”

Leanne suddenly bursts into a smile. “Everything is just fine, sweetheart. Did you sleep well?”

He walks over to sit down, still confused, and Hannibal hands him a bowl of biscuits.

“I slept ok.”

“That’s great, Honey. I was thinking maybe today you and I could go out for the day. Have a little mommy time.”

Will blinks. “Um…”

“Leanne, I’m sure Will has plans of his own with Beverly. Don’t you, Will?”

He feels like he’s missing something. “I can cancel.”

Leanne laughs, shaking her head. “It’s ok, baby, you have fun. Mommy and Hannibal will...have some fun of our own.”

Will’s blood runs cold as Hannibal hands him another bowl filled with bacon. He glares at him.

“I can definitely cancel,” he repeats as Hannibal frowns.

“Will…”

“Oh honey, you’re so sweet to do that,” Leanne says, making Will look at her again, “But if you really do have plans…”

Will picks up a bowl of eggs and takes two spoonfuls before biting into a piece of bacon.

“No, Mom,” he says, his teeth gritting together, “I want to spend time with you.”

Leanne’s smile fades. “I want to spend time with you too, baby. I think we have a lot to talk about.”

“Perhaps I should come as well,” Hannibal starts to say, “It’s a lovely day we can all go on the boat or…”

Will doesn’t look at him.

“No, I think...I want to spend some time with my Mom.”

Leanne takes a bite of bacon, her skin pale and eyes sunken in so much Will’s sure this is the biggest meal she’s had since he got here.

“Mommy Son Day,” she says, “We’re gonna have a lot of fun.”

Will looks at Hannibal who seems both angry and upset.

His teeth feel heavy in his mouth as he takes a bite of eggs and smiles.

“Yeah, I think we will too.”

Chapter 25

Will goes into his bedroom to change clothes after and pulls out his phone to text Bev.

Change of plans today. Mom wants to have a Mother Son Day.

And you're going willingly?

Yeah I'll text you later.

Are you ok?

I'm fine Bev.

He tosses his phone down onto the bed and goes to grab a pair of shorts that aren't swim trunks only for someone to knock at the door.

"Yeah?"

"May I come in?"

"I'm getting dressed," Will sighs, "Wait just a second."

He gets out of his trunks and is pulling on the shorts when the door opens. "I said--"

Hannibal leans against the door and shakes his head. "This can't wait."

"H---"

He rushes up to kiss Will hard, making him sigh, and when they pull apart Will can see his skin is tinted blue.

"Please don't go," Hannibal says, "Please, Will."

"It'll be fine," Will laughs, pulling away, "Leanne…"

Hannibal grabs his arm hard. "...is not in her right mind," he hisses, shaking his head, "Whatever this...*day*...is...it's not because she wants to spend time with you."

Will steps up to kiss him again and smiles. " I can take care of myself, ok? I can. I battled a water snake," Will lies, "I can deal with Leanne for a few hours."

Hannibal puts both his hands on Will's cheeks and presses their foreheads together.

"If you need me, just call and I will come."

"I will," Will says, "But it'll be fine. She might...throw a hissy fit because she thinks I'm stealing her boyfriend but other than that I don't think it'll be that bad."

Hannibal sighs as they step away from each other. “I still feel that this is a very bad idea.”

Will smiles. “I’m surprised you didn’t try to give her a sedative to stop us from going.”

“I tried,” Hannibal admits, “She wouldn’t take even a single thing from me.”

Will shrugs. “Next time stick it in the eggs,” he teases, “Have a good day, Doctor Lecter.”

“Be safe, Mielasis,” Hannibal whispers, walking up to touch his cheek again, “Please.”

“I will.”

He walks down the hall feeling warm from Hannibal’s worry and even Leanne sitting on the couch waiting for him doesn’t ruin Will’s mood.

“Ready to go, sweetheart?” she asks, “Hannibal won’t let me take his car so we’ll have to take yours.”

Will frowns. “I don’t---”

“I have your keys, Will,” Hannibal says from behind him, making Will turn.

He’s holding Will’s keys and still looks like he’s sending them off to war. Will takes the keys and smiles.

“Thanks.”

“See you later, Hanni,” Leanne says, walking over to kiss Hannibal softly, “Don’t wait up.”

Will laughs as he walks over to his car. “You’re gonna keep me out all night?”

Leanne’s smile from earlier fades a bit as she looks at Will from the other side of the car.

“We’ll see, baby,” she says, “We’ll see.”

Will closes the door as he slips into the driver’s side and reaches for his seat belt.

“So...where are we going?”

“Turn left when you get to the highway, honey,” Leanne says, “And just keep driving.”

He turns to look at her as he puts the key in the ignition and sees she’s staring out the window.

At Hannibal.

Will frowns. “Okay.”

“We might want to stop for gas after a while,” she says as he pulls away, “We have a long drive ahead.”

He frowns. “I…I really don’t...”

Leanne holds up a credit card and smiles. “Don’t worry, sweetie. Hanni is footin’ the bill.”

Will doesn’t say anything after that, his anger at Leanne snatching Hannibal’s card already too much, and when she turns on the radio her off key singing doesn’t help matters much. He’s treated for the next half hour to what is essentially bad karaoke of songs he’s never even heard of, and by the time they get to the first gas station he’s happy to get out of the car.

Maybe this *was* a bad idea.

He slips Hannibal’s card into the machine and pulls out his phone.

There’s one text message.

Be safe.

Will feels warm all over at the message.

Right now I’m just trying to survive the bad eighties music.

He slips the phone into his pocket and gets back into a strangely quiet car. Leanne is staring straight ahead and when he looks Will sees nothing. “Mom?”

She shakes herself, smiles, and touches his cheek. “My baby.”

“Are you ok?”

Leanne looks like she might cry and Will’s very confused. “I will be, baby. I just...Mommy’s having a rough couple weeks.”

He frowns. “Are you sick? Hannibal said---”

“*Hannibal*,” she says, looking at Will’s neck suddenly, “Says a *lot* of things, doesn’t he?”

Will starts the car, hating the blush that comes to his cheeks. “He does talk a lot, yeah,” he mumbles, pulling out of the gas station, “I thought you liked that about him.”

Leanne lifts her gaze and the dark look suddenly changes into a frown.

“Mommy’s gonna take a nap, baby,” she says, sighing, “Just...drive straight for a while, ok?”

He frowns. “Okay.”

This day is turning out nothing like Will expects, and he wishes he’d listened to Hannibal earlier.

He won’t make that mistake again.

Leanne sleeps as Will drives for the next half hour, even going past the fancy restaurant, and he finally just decides to pull into a forest preserve that overlooks the lake. There’s plenty of

people there for mid-morning, and being near the water makes him feel much better.

He pulls out his phone.

How's it going?

She's being weird.

Aren't all moms weird?

She won't tell me where she wants us to go so I've just been driving for almost two hours.

That...is weird. What's she doing now?

Sleeping.

Maybe you should just turn back around and call it a day?

Will sighs.

Maybe.

He looks out at a family of three sitting on the grass having a picnic while two fishing poles lean up against a lawn chair. It's a little hot for a picnic, but they seem to be having fun, and Will's chest aches suddenly missing his Dad.

"Your father always wanted to have kids."

Will jumps, startled, and sees Leanne staring out at the family.

"And you?"

"I didn't," she says, her voice shaking, "I...I hated kids," she laughs, "But...I had one anyway."

Will's chest hurts as he watches her. "Is that why you left?"

She stares out at the family with tears in her eyes.

"Is it?"

Will waits for an answer but instead she gets out of the car. He pulls out his keys and follows after locking the door. "Leanne, where…."

She ignores him and turns off into the woods away from the crowd.

"Mom, stop."

Leanne says nothing and keeps walking.

"Where are you going?"

Will looks back at the car one more time and wonders if he should call Hannibal.

“Leanne, stop, just…”

He looks up again and sees she’s still walking, and heading for the water.

Will sighs and heads after her.

Leanne sits down in the bright yellow pants that for sure now have stains. The striped shirt she’s wearing is just about the ugliest piece of clothes Will’s ever seen and yet he doesn’t stop staring at her as he sits beside her. Will puts his hand in the water and feels calm for the first time since they started Mommy Son day.

There’s a duck far off in the water with a few babies. Neither of them say anything as they watch the duck, and before long it swims off leaving them alone. Will’s not even sure what time it is anymore, but he worries about getting back in the car.

“Why did you leave?” he asks again, knowing she probably won’t answer.

Leanne glares at him coldly. “Because if I stayed, I would’ve killed you.”

He blinks. “What?”

She suddenly bursts into tears, shaking her head. “I didn’t...I couldn’t...I…”

Will stands up so fast he can hardly breathe. “What are you talking about?”

“I didn’t know I was pregnant,” she sobs, “I...I don’t even remember how I…”

He feels tears falling down his face. “WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?”

“I DIDN’T WANT TO HAVE KIDS!” she yells, splashing her hands into the water, “I...I *knew*...there was something wrong and…”

“WELL YOU HAD A KID, MOM!” He yells, looking out wildly and seeing no one around them, “And you...you...if you hated me that bad why did you even…”

Leanne jumps up and rushes to Will grabbing his shirt. “He *made* me bring you here,” she whispers, shaking her head, “You...you know I didn’t even want to, but he….he kept *pushing*…” she growls, “And I want him, baby...I want him so much...and you...you…you’re trying to take him away from me.”

Will can hardly see through his tears. “I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

She laughs and tries to shake him but Will pushes her off hard.

“I SEE THE WAY HE LOOKS AT YOU! I SEE!”

He laughs. “I don’t know what you’re even…”

“WHO GAVE YOU THAT HICKEY?”

Will puts a hand on his neck. “You…” he laughs, “...you think Hannibal did this?”

Leanne suddenly sobs. “I LOVE HIM! I NEED HIM! YOU DON’T NEED HIM! NO ONE WILL LOVE ME AND HE…”

Will shakes his head. “I’m not stealing him,” he lies, “Leanne, there’s something wrong with you. I don’t know what’s wrong but...I’m not doing anything.”

She puts her hands over her face and watches her shoulders heave as she crumbles to the ground.

He doesn’t go to comfort her, wiping the tears from his face, and sits down to stare at the water.

Hannibal was right.

He should’ve stayed home.

“All I wanted to do was meet my Mom,” he whispers, his voice shaking, “When I was little it’s all I...all I wanted. Dad never told me what happened and now...now I…”

Will wipes his face again as suddenly he sees a blue fin out on the water. He blinks.

It can’t be.

He looks at Leanne, whose eyes look half open as she stares blankly out but seems to see nothing.

“I know it’s you,” she whispers, “I know.”

Will suddenly wishes he could just push her into the water and watch her struggle to swim as she drowns. His teeth feel heavy in his mouth and his vision starts to redden. He blinks and it’s right again but the tears keep coming.

“There’s something wrong with you, *Mom*,” he hisses, “And if you’re this terrified that this *thing* you have going with Hannibal is so razor thin that I could tear it apart so quick? Then it obviously wasn’t much at all.”

Leanne turns slowly again to look at him. “Michael’s not your father, you know,” she says, smiling, “And he doesn’t even know.”

He stares at her. “What?”

“I don’t...I don’t even know who your father is!” she laughs, shaking her head, “I don’t...I just remember...I remember...I remember feeling so good and waking up...and then...when you came...I...I don’t remember any of it!” she laughs, “It’s like...YOU WERE NEVER EVEN BORN AT ALL!”

Will shakes his head. “You’re lying, you…”

Leanne's smile fades and she stares at him with wide eyes. "WHO ARE YOU?!?"

He growls and pushes her down into the water. Her eyes widen and she opens her mouth to scream but no sounds come out. "YOU'RE LYING!" Will yells, his vision red, "YOU LYING BITCH! YOU'RE LYING!"

Leanne struggles and Will lets out a sob as he puts his hands around her neck. "HE IS MY FATHER! HE IS!"

Will tightens his hands and sobs. "LIAR!"

He suddenly feels someone pull him back and he knows immediately it's Hannibal. Hannibal holds Will tight to his chest as he sobs, digging his nails into Hannibal's back, and the scent of him makes everything better.

"Shh…"

"She….she…."

Hannibal kisses Will's temple. "She's alive," he says.

"I don't care," Will whispers, his voice shaking, "I can't...I can't do this anymore. Not...she…"

"Will…"

He lifts his head up and stares into Hannibal's eyes. "I want to go home."

Hannibal shakes his head. "No, Will."

"She's a monster," Will says, shaking, "She...she…."

He puts his hands on Will's cheeks and stares into his eyes. "Please, Will. Please. I cannot lose you so soon, not when I've just found you."

Will shakes his head. "I can't...I can't…"

Hannibal kisses him hard, and Will moans, putting his hands on Hannibal's face.

"Please, Mielasis," Hannibal whispers, "Please, please, *please*!"

Will whimpers. "I…"

"Just one night," Hannibal begs, "Just...one. I will make it right. I will."

He sighs. "I don't see how you can."

"Please, WIll. For me?"

Will nods.

Hannibal kisses him again softly. “Get in the car and go to the Drake Hotel. There will be a room in your name. Please wait for me there.”

Will turns to look at Leanne, still lying completely still. “Are you sure she’s…?”

“She’s alive. I will take Leanne home and sedate her. We will have the rest of the night to ourselves. I promise you, Will, I will make it right.”

His chest aches as he stares at her. “I hate her.”

“I know.”

“She told me…”

“About Michael not being your father,” Hannibal finishes.

Will frowns. “You knew?”

“Yes,” he sighs, “It was not my place to tell you, I’m sorry.”

He pulls away from him and stares out at the water. The blue fin is gone and Will aches to see it more than anything right now. “I don’t know how you can fix this.”

“I don’t either,” Hannibal sighs, “But I am going to try. Go now, Will. I promise I will see you soon.”

Will gets into his car, still reeling from what just happened, and suddenly is starving as he pulls away. He stops at the nearest fast food place and hates to use the card he finds sitting on the passenger seat but knows Hannibal won’t mind. He orders two cheeseburgers, a large fry, and a large drink that he guzzles down like he hasn’t eaten in year before pulling out his phone.

His GPS tells him the Drake Hotel is at least another hour away, much to his annoyance, but he drives there because he just wants to rest. Will pulls up to an obviously expensive hotel and rolls the window down.

The valet smiles at him. “Will Graham?”

He blinks. “Um…”

“You can leave your key in the ignition, sir. We will park it for you. Please come inside. Bianca will show you to your room.”

Will gets out of the car and follows the valet toward a blonde woman with green eyes.

“Hello, Mr. Graham. Please.”

He’s sure he looks like shit but Biance walks him through the nicest hotel he’s ever seen like royalty. The elevator takes them up all the way to the top and Will steps out into a room that’s almost as big as Hannibal’s whole house.

“Enjoy our stay,” Bianca says, handing him a key.

“Thank you.”

The door closes behind her and Will goes right to the shower. It’s the nicest and biggest shower he’s ever seen. He climbs under the cool spray and puts his webbed fingers against the tile with tears in his eyes.

Everything makes sense now.

Whoever his father is, he’s obviously just like Will, and the blue and green finned creatures.

He suddenly misses his Dad terribly and sinks to the floor as the water goes over him.

Will hears Leanne’s crazed question echo in his head.

WHO ARE YOU?

“I don’t...I don’t know.”

He doesn’t know how long he sits there under the spray but when the shower door opens he looks up and there is Hannibal.

Hannibal holds out his hand. “Come, Mielasis,” he whispers, “Let me get you warm.”

Will stands on shaky legs and rushes to Hannibal, falling into his arms.

“Shhh…”

“I...I…”

Hannibal wraps him in a white robe before he carries Will out of the bathroom. He buries his face against Hannibal’s neck and breathes in as they move.

“Hannibal…”

He walks them toward a bed and holds Will tight as he lays them down..

“I should never have let you leave.”

Will doesn’t say anything.

“Leanne is fine,” Hannibal says, “She woke in the car and...does not remember a thing.”

He laughs.

“Lucky her.”

Hannibal runs fingers through his hair. “Will…”

“She told me...she wanted to kill me when I was a baby.”

“Will..”

“And she told me she doesn’t even want me here now,” he whispers, lifting his head, “That you...you made her bring me here. Why?”

Hannibal sighs. “I thought sons would want to be reunited with their mothers, and mothers would want to be reunited with their sons.”

Will kisses him. “I did,” he whispers, “But she...she didn’t...but...if you hadn’t...we’d never…”

Hannibal frowns. “I’m sorry, Will. I hate to see you in pain.”

He stares down at him. “You...you said you would make it right.”

“Yes.”

Will climbs off him, tossing the robe aside.

“I don’t want to think about her anymore,” he whispers, “I just…I just want you.”

Hannibal’s gaze runs down Will’s entire body and he smiles, running his hand down Will’s chest.

Hannibal runs his hands down Will’s sides and he shudders. “I will take away your pain, Mielasis...and give you...nothing but pleasure.”

Will’s vision is red as a tear falls down his face.

“Please.”

He watches Hannibal stand and begin to undress, knowing this night will be one he will never forget.

And Leanne has no one but herself to blame.

Chapter 26

Will feels his body getting hotter as he watches Hannibal undress in a red haze.

“You...god you’re so hot,” he sighs, “I…honestly I’ve never seen who’s even close to...you’re just so…”

Hannibal lets his shirt fall, exposing his chest, and smiles. “Thank you, Will.”

He can’t resist touching himself as Hannibal undoes his pants, and whimpers as he lets everything fall to the floor below his waist. The sight of him completely naked makes Will’s whole body ache and he feels like he’s underwater as Hannibal comes onto the bed again.

Will’s teeth feel heavy in his mouth as Hannibal stares down at him.

“What do you need, Mielasis?”

He reaches out with both hands and pulls Hannibal down into a kiss. Will shudders as their bodies touch, lost in the feeling of skin to skin, and ruts up against him.

Hannibal’s tongue feels like it’s a foot long as they kiss, and Will’s sweating so much his ass is wet. He knows he should pull back for breath but finds he can’t stop, won’t, and when Hannibal finally does he whimpers at the loss.

“No, no…”

His face is bluer than Will’s ever seen it as he smiles down at him. “I’m not going anywhere,” he whispers, putting both hands on Will’s cheeks, “We’ve only just begun.”

Will blinks and his vision is normal again. He hums as Hannibal licks down his chest, gasping as he sucks on his nipple. He keeps humming, lost in the song, and for the first time realizes it sounds like the one Hannibal sung in the office.

“I...I know it,” he laughs, “I...I know the song.”

Hannibal lifts his head and Will wonders why his eyes always look so red.

“You always have, Will,” he says, smiling, “You always have.”

He feels sweat drip down his face as they stare at each other. “I don’t understand,” he whispers, “But...I feel like I sort of do?”

Hannibal moves to suckle his other nipple and he cries out, never once looking away from him.

He flicks his tongue at it after and Will almost purrs. “Yes, Mielasis,” he praises, “Yes.”

“Sing it for me,” Will whispers, “I want...I want to hear it.”

Hannibal begins to hum as he makes his way down Will's belly, and Will joins in just as he stops at Will's waist. He looks up with tears in his eyes, still humming that song Will can feel in his very bones, and opens Will's legs.

Mine.

The word makes Will bare his teeth and Hannibal disappears out of sight before his tongue teases Will's hole. Will cries out and grips his hair as he begins to lick, whimpering as his already so hard cock aches, and he feels so ready to come but knows he can't.

Not yet.

Will moans as Hannibal's tongue touches everywhere inside, every part of him a live wire, and the heat is an inferno now.

"Please," he begs, gripping Hannibal's hair, "Oh god...please…"

Hannibal doesn't stop, relentless as he tongue fucks him, and Will's cock is weeping precum as he reaches to stroke but nothing comes. He hisses, vision red again, and grips Hannibal's hair hard.

"Fuck me, fuck me, fuck…"

Will hums, lost in song, and Hannibal lifts his head to look at him again.

"Your fevered sweetness is...addictive," he praises, "The best taste I've ever experienced, and ever will again. You...bewitch me."

Will sighs. "Please."

Hannibal licks his lips. "What do you need, Will?"

"You," he says, his voice thick, "I need...I need you."

"What do you need me to do?"

"Fuck me," Will whimpers, "I...I need you in me, Hannibal, because I feel like I might die soon if you're not."

Hannibal sits back up again and for a moment Will feels like his skin is rippling. He blinks and it's normal again. "Get on your belly for me, Mielasis."

Will frowns. "But…"

"It's more comfortable," Hannibal says softly, "For your first time."

"But I want to see you," Will says, "I want…"

Hannibal kisses Will's lower belly. "You'll feel me, Will," he promises, "It's more than enough."

Will doesn't move for a moment, tears stinging his eyes, and then rolls onto his belly. The wetness of his ass hits the air and he shivers as Hannibal moves in behind him.

"Get on your knees for me," Hannibal says, his voice almost a growl, "Show me how much you need me."

He's shaking as he gets up on his knees, humming the song again as he sticks his ass out, and turns to look back but Hannibal's suddenly there to stop him. His body is flush at Will's back, cock just barely teasing his hole, and Will cries out in frustration.

"H...h…"

Hannibal licks Will's ear and his whole body shudders. "Do you feel me, Mielasis? Do you?"

He nods, barely able to speak. "I...yes."

"Then there's no need to look."

Will opens his mouth to protest just as Hannibal hums. He hums in return, their voices hitting together, and Will grinds back against his cock. "Pl…"

Hannibal thrusts in fast and he cries out as he fills him.

"So tight for me," Hannibal growls, "So wet...so p..r...fect."

Will feels like his cock is suddenly much longer, bigger, but he doesn't complain thrusting back against every one of Hannibal's movements. He touches himself as he drills into him, purring with each movement, and when Hannibal turns his face for a kiss he doesn't even open his eyes.

Hannibal's mouth feels strange but he knows it's him, feels him, and a sharp hard thrust has Will's vision blurring as he opens his eyes again. Will gasps for breath, drowning in desire, and when he hangs his head down again he sees the fingers on his hands are all webbed.

Will knows he needs to keep it together but he can't, screaming as Hannibal bites down on his shoulder, and spilling across the sheets. He sobs his release, barely able to breath, and Hannibal turns his face again for a kiss.

Hannibal's cock feels like heaven and he doesn't want to stop, never stop, but a sharp groan is all it takes before he feels a strange thickness spilling inside him one by one. His whole body sings as he's filled, desperate to take every last one, and when Hannibal collapses on him he can barely keep his eyes open.

Their skin feels different, but he doesn't know why, and when Hannibal licks the bite on his shoulder Will hums that song again.

"Mine," he sighs, as his eyes start to close.

"All yours," Hannibal whispers, his voice strange, "Always and forever."

Will wakes up to Hannibal sucking him off, arching up to meet his mouth, and comes with a groan. Hannibal swallows every last drop, eyes never leaving his, and when he pulls his mouth away he kisses Will softly.

“Good morning.”

He smiles. “Yeah, it is.”

Hannibal pulls him in close to his chest. “How do you feel?”

“Perfect,” Will sighs, closing his eyes, “Like...I dunno...like I just found something I didn’t know I’d lost. You know?”

Hannibal runs fingers through his hair. “Yes, I know that feeling well. You’re...not sore?”

Will sighs. “A little, but it’s a good sore.”

“Mmm, that’s good.”

“How much time do we have?”

“As long as you need.”

He lifts his head and smiles. “Leanne isn’t gonna come charging in here with a butcher knife?”

Hannibal frowns at him. “I will never let her hurt you again, you know that don’t you?”

Will looks away. “You can’t be everywhere at once, Hannibal, and...I can’t go back there.”

“Will…”

“I can’t go back there,” he repeats, voice shaking, “I c…”

Hannibal turns his cheek and Will looks at him with tears in his eyes. “I cannot lose you so soon.”

“You won’t, you—”

He wipes Will’s tears with his thumb and sighs. “If you leave now you’ll be a state away and we…will have no reason to communicate. This place and their *laws* would separate us forever. Do you want this to be our last time together?”

“That’s not fair.”

“I know it’s not, Mielasis,” Hannibal sighs, “But tell me I’m mistaken.”

Will wipes the tears from his cheeks. “Fuck you for even….,” he glared at him, “She was gonna kill me, Hannibal! She…she might even do it again and you’re…”

Hannibal pulls Will to his chest and Will hits him whimpering as he kisses his forehead. “I will not let her hurt you, Mielasis. Not ever again.”

Will digs his nails into Hannibal’s back as he hugs him.

“I don’t want to be alone with her,” he hisses, “Not ever again.”

“You will not be,” Hannibal whispers, “I promise you.”

They hold each other in silence for what feels like forever until Will speaks again.

“Fine,” he says, “But after this summer I won’t come again. If you think that’s not fair then… deal with it.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Fair enough. You’ll be old enough for it not to matter in… August, yes?”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

“Then…no one will care.”

He laughs and sniffles. “*Oh,* they’ll care. Especially Leanne.”

Hannibal lifts Will’s chin up and smiles. “I couldn't care less. She is now merely a conduit keeping us close together.”

Will frowns. “I don’t like that idea.”

“How about…a useful tool to keep you close to me?”

He smiles. “I don’t think she’s useful at all but…it’s better.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “My beautiful Will.”

Will blushes and opens his mouth to speak when suddenly his stomach makes a weird sound. It’s not quite a growl but he feels instantly starving.

“It seems you’re in need of sustenance.”

He laughs, blushing as Hannibal reaches for the phone on the bedside table. “I guess so.”

“What would you like? I can order us some eggs or…”

Will licks his lips, putting a hand on his belly. “Fish,” he says, “Can I have fish?”

Hannibal puts his hand over Will’s and smiles. “You can have *anything*.”

Will entwines their fingers together. “I want fish,” he says, “And eggs,” he sighs and pushes Hannibal down on the bed, “And meat. I want meat.”

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “Whatever you desire, Mielasis. It will be yours.”

Will crawls onto his lap and nuzzles Hannibal's neck.

"Mmm…kay."

He lays his head down, breathing in the scent that's purely Hannibal.

"….and sausage. Yes. Yes. Thank you."

Hannibal pulls him closer and Will sighs.

"It's coming?"

"Yes, very soon."

Will hums and Hannibal joins in making him warm all over. It's not like last night. This….just feels nice.

He teases his teeth against Hannibal's neck and feels him tremble in response. "Marking me again?"

"I wish I could mark you all over."

Hannibal presses his lips to Will's ear. "What's stopping you?"

Will lifts his head. "You know what….or *who.*"

"Will…"

He frowns. "Are you gonna touch her again?"

Hannibal runs fingers over his lips. "Not like I touch you."

Will moves to leave the bed but Hannibal pins him down. "Let me go!"

"No."

"You're still just gonna…"

Hannibal shakes his head. "I have not had sexual relations with Leanne since we shared our first kiss, and I do not plan on doing so again. I may have to…feign domesticity…but she is a *tool,* not my ma—Mielasis. You…are *everything.*"

Will can hardly see through his sudden tears. "You promise?"

"I promise."

He wraps his arms around Hannibal's neck as they kiss and they roll until he's on top. Hannibal moans as Will moves against him, and soon they're grinding together as another orgasm is so close Will's body aches. He pulls back, panting for breath, and stares at Hannibal's face flushed with desire.

“Can I…see you now?”

Hannibal smiles. “Whatever you desire.”

Will doesn’t hesitate, not even for a moment, and moves so he can sink right down onto Hannibal’s cock groaning as he’s inside. His teeth feel heavy in his mouth as Hannibal pulls him down for a kiss and Will moans when Hannibal thrusts up to meet his movements. He rolls them again and pulls back growling as he stares down at Will.

“Promise me,” Hannibal whispers, “Only I will see you this way.”

He nods, pulling him closer. “Please,” Will moans, “Please I want…”

Hannibal begins to drill into him fast, hard, and Will cries out with each thrust. He feels his hands shift as he digs claws into Hannibal’s back but doesn’t care, pulling him in deeper as he legs go up high. “Will...oh Will..I...I can’t…”

“Mine,” Will hisses, biting his neck hard, and growling as he feels Hannibal come inside him.

The pleasure he feels as Hannibal fills him makes Will spill between them, whimpering as he nuzzles his neck, and they roll to the side holding each other tightly.

“We’re good at that,” Will jokes, laughing.

“Mmm,” Hannibal sighs, kissing his cheek, “Yes, we are.”

There’s a buzz that fills the room.

“What’s that?”

“Breakfast,” Hannibal mumbles, separating them reluctantly to stand and pull on a robe, “I will return.”

Will smiles as he lays there, staring up at the ceiling, and puts a hand on his belly. He’s hungry still, not starving but it’s enough, and a serene feeling overtakes him he doesn’t quite understand.

“Fuck you, Leanne,” he laughs, rolling onto his side. He feels come leak out of his ass and closes his eyes happily.

This feels right.

Fuck everything else.

He hears the sound of wheels on the wood floor and opens his eyes just as Hannibal wheels a cart into the bedroom. The cart is filled with covered silver dishes and Will sits up to watch him come inside.

“All of this is for us?”

“Oh yes,” Hannibal says, smiling, “I wouldn’t want you to be hungry.”

Will grins.

“Of course not.”

Hannibal uncovers each meal one by one.

“Eggs Benedict, belgian waffles, sausage links, bacon, and...smoked salmon.”

Will goes immediately for the fish, eating fast as Hannibal watches him, shaking as he devours the whole plate of salmon. He gabs the bacon next, not stopping for even a sip of whatever type of juice is there in a pitcher for them both, and when he’s finally done he collapses on the bed with a sigh.

“That...was....amazing.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I’m glad you approve.”

“I didn’t realize I was so starving.”

“Yes, you’ve hardly eaten since yesterday.”

“I felt like I could eat a whole cow.”

Hannibal smiles against his cheek. “And now?”

“Maybe a steak,” Will laughs, “Or a hamburger.”

“Now? I can call room service to bring more food.”

He shakes his head. “Maybe on the ride back to the house.”

The sentence makes them both quiet.

“I wish…”

Will sighs. “I do too.”

“We could...share the shower before we go?”

He lifts his head and smiles. “*That* is an amazing idea.”

Their walk to the shower makes Will warm in that ‘good’ way again, and the shower itself is so much different than the one last night. He feels cared for, protected, and when they’re done he doesn’t feel bad dressing in clothes from yesterday.

Everything feels different.

He sits on the bed as Hannibal dresses, and they kiss a little more before they leave.

They leave the room and it makes him tear up but he stops himself from crying, putting a hand on his belly as they find their way out of the hotel. He buckles his seat belt and Hannibal frowns at him.

“I promise, Will,” he whispers, taking Will’s hand, “I will protect you.”

Will smiles. “I know.”

Hannibal stops at Fuller’s on the way home and gets Will a hamburger that he eats as they drive. He looks at his phone while he’s finishing and sees Bev left some texts.

How did it go with Mom?

How’s it going?

Will you better answer me soon or I’m gonna go to your house.

Will answer me!

I’m ok! I just had a bad day. I'm sorry!

I WAS WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU! WHERE WERE YOU!?

I have a lot to tell you. Can I come over later?

You’d better!

He smiles and puts down his phone.

“How is Beverly?”

“She was worried. I...I’m gonna tell her.”

Hannibal takes his hand. “If you trust her, then...by all means.”

Will squeezes his hand. “I do.”

“I can drop you at her house if you’d like?”

“No, I...I wanna change first.”

“As you wish.”

They pull up to the house just before noon, and Will gets out of the car. It’s quiet, almost eerily so, and he waits for Hannibal to get out before following him inside.

“I expect Leanne is still resting.”

Will lets out a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding. “Thank god,” he says, kissing Hannibal fast, “I’m gonna go change and walk to Bev’s.”

“Of course.”

He heads for his room and changes fast before he runs out into the hall. Will is almost to the door when he spots someone on the couch.

It’s Leanne.

Will stares at her with wide eyes.

“Leanne?”

Her face is almost gray as she smiles at him. “Good morning, baby boy, baby, my baby,” she says, “How’s...where are you off to?”

Will puts a hand on his belly as he steps back. “I’m...going to Bev’s.”

“Bev, Bev, Bev, she’s...Bev is…”

“Will.”

He looks over and sees Hannibal standing in the hallway. “I’m...is she ok?”

“She’s fine,” Hannibal says, smiling, “Go enjoy yourself at Beverly’s.”

Will looks at Leanne and when she smiles her teeth look just as gray as her skin. “Have a good time!”

“Uh...bye.”

He races out of the house with his stomach in knots.

Leanne really doesn’t remember what happened yesterday and was obviously getting sicker with whatever Hannibal felt he couldn’t tell him.

Will shouldn’t feel bad for her.

Not after yesterday.

He puts a hand on his neck and feels Hannibal’s bite mark.

Today was not a day to think about Leanne.

He pushes all thoughts of her away and smiles as he sends a text to Bev.

I’m on my way.

Chapter 27

Bev's waiting for Will on her porch as he walks up and the minute she sees him her eyes widen.

"Oh...my....god!" she practically yells, rushing up to him.

He frowns. "What's…?"

She grins from ear to ear as she pulls down the edge of his t-shirt. "We have *ALOT* to talk about, I see. You're just holding out on me again cuz this one is worse than the last. You…"

Will blushes just as the door opens and Bev wraps her arm around his neck when her Mom comes outside carrying a watering can. "Good morning, Will! Nice to see you. How are you doing honey?"

His blush deepens as Bev giggles into his shoulder. "Good, Mrs. Katz. Thank you."

"That's great. I'm so glad you're ok. How is Hannibal?"

Will's stiffens and Bev whispers in his ear. "Oh my god, oh my god...it's not from the swimmer guy, is it? Will…"

"He's," he smiles, "He's fine."

"Good, good," Bev's Mom says watering the flowers on the porch, "And your Mother?"

"She's not feeling well," Will says, "But she's ok, Hannibal is taking care of her."

"Of course he is. Leanne is a lucky woman to have found someone so good to her."

Will frowns. "Yeah."

"Breakfast is ready inside, if you're hungry," she says, "And I'm sure you don't want to go swimming after the last time but...my husband has been keeping an eye on the water the last few days. No sightings of any kind of snake, I promise."

Bev lifts her head. "Oh Mom, I think Will's had enough biting for this week."

Will bites his lip to keep from laughing.

"Oh I'm sure," Bev's Mom says, "Come inside when you're ready."

They wait till she's gone to burst out laughing.

"Oh my god, Will, you…."

He shakes his head, giggling. "I can't…"

Bev grins as she catches her breath. “You...have a *lot*...of explaining to do.”

Will sighs, nodding. “Yeah, I...you wanna take a walk?”

She smiles, holding out her arm. “Lead the way, Mister Graham.”

The two of them start walking away back down the path, though Will knows they won’t get far in this heat. It's better to have this conversation alone.

“Sooo…”

His neck feels a little itchy as they stop halfway and sit in the grass.

“Yeah…”

“Will.”

“It’s...from Hannibal.”

Bev leans her head against his shoulder and sighs. “I thought so.”

“I know you don’t...like the whole thing but...I’m happy, ok? I am.”

“I can tell,” she says, “What happened to the swimmer?”

“He’s...not over either.”

“Will…”

“Hannibal knows there’s someone,” he sighs, “I...I just…”

“Not even two weeks and you have not one, not two, but THREE men after you,” she laughs, “I mean I get it, you’re adorable, but...this could end in disaster.”

“It won’t,” Will whispers, leaning against her, “I promise. I’m ok.”

They both sigh.

“So...this new...bite.”

“Hannibal and I...um....we…”

Bev turns Will’s cheek and stares into his eyes. “You had sex.”

He blushes. “Yes.”

She squeals. “Oh god, you’re fucking your mom’s boyfriend!”

“Shh!” Will laughs, “Someone might hear you!”

“I hope they do,” she says, “This is the stuff dreams are made of.”

They both laugh. “I thought...you’d be more upset.”

“I’m not...thrilled...that you’ve decided to become Hannibal’s side piece, but---”

He pulls away, his chest tightening. “It’s not like that.”

“Will....”

Will blinks and his vision is red. He squeezes his eyes shut. “It’s *not*, Bev. He...he cares about me, ok? I...I feel safe with him.”

They're both quiet for what feels like a long time before Bev breaks the silence.

“If you’re happy, I’m happy,” she says softly as Will opens his eyes, “But be careful, ok? I mean I know you’re not like running a risk of getting knocked up or something but...just be careful. You said your Mom is acting weird, and you’re still not exactly of age. This is just...things could happen.”

“I know,” he says, smiling, “But honestly I’m the happiest I’ve been since this all started.”

She frowns. “You keep saying that but...did something else happen?”

Will looks away as tears fill his eyes.

“Will?”

“I got into it with Leanne on our day out together,” he whispers, “She...said some stuff I’m still processing.”

“Shit, I’m...if you don’t want to talk about it yet that’s ok.”

He smiles at her. “You know,” he says softly, taking her hand, “I had like *zero* friends before I came here and now...I’m really happy that we’re friends, Bev.”

She throws her arms around him and smiles against his neck. “Me too, Will. I...feel like we knew each other in a past life or something.”

They both laugh as she pulls back.

“Maybe we fought crime together,” he jokes, “Taking down bad guys one by one.”

“I think I was probably better than you at it though,” she teases, laying her head on his shoulder again, “You were probably too busy all up in Hannibal’s business.”

“Oh he’s there too?”

“Obviously.”

They laugh again.

“So...now that you’ve talked about your torrid affair...I can tell you about mine.”

Will gasps, shaking her off his shoulder. “Oh my god, did something happen with Abby?”

She grins. “Maaaybe?”

“Bev…”

“We may or may not have kissed yesterday.”

“Oh my god that’s great!”

She beams. “Yeah, it is. I...I really like her. My parents like her too, she came by and we hung out a little.”

Will smiles. “Only two weeks into the summer and Bev’s already got a girlfriend.”

“Nooo,” she says, shaking her head, “Not a girlfriend, not yet. Her dad is...weird, and if things even get that far we’ll probably have to have a secret love affair like you and Hannibal.”

“Oh,” Will says, “That sucks.”

“Yeah, but it’s ok. Pretty soon we’ll all be in college and away from here. He can’t ruin her life forever.”

“Still…”

Bev stands up, groaning, and dusts off her legs. “Now that all the drama is expressed,” she sighs, “I think it’s time to get inside out of the heat and enjoy breakfast. Though...you’ll have to explain your neck mauling to my folks.”

Will laughs. “I can do that.”

They start to walk again back toward the Katz house, the sun beaming down, and Will feels nothing but calm. There’s still the trouble with Leanne at home but for now there’s really nothing bad that can happen to him.

He stares up at the sky as the sun hits his face and laughs.

“You really *are* happy, huh?”

Will smiles at Bev. “Yeah, I think I am.”

She smiles back. “Good.”

They talk about nothing and everything after that, mostly what movies they both have and haven’t watched, which makes it hard to pay much attention even as the Katz house comes into view.

But they both stop when it does because there’s a truck in front of the house that wasn’t there before.

Matt's.

"Shit."

Will stiffens. "I thought you said your Dad didn't need him anymore."

"That's what I thought but---"

They don't see Matt anywhere outside, which almost makes things worse, and Will is about ready to just turn back and go home.

"We can go back to your house or…"

The door opens and Bev's dad comes out with Matt in tow. Both men stop on the steps when they see Will and Bev.

"Bevvie, look who's here!"

"Hey...Matt," Bev sneers, "Did you not fix the car right the first time?"

Matt grins. "Funny," he says, his gaze moving from Bev to Will, "Hey Will."

Will frowns. "Hi."

"Out for a walk?" Bev's dad asks.

"Yeah," Bev mumbles, "What are you both up to?"

The two men walk over to Bev and Will, who moves back the minute Matt gets closer.

"Matt is coming with me to look at Mister Caruthers' boat," her Dad says, "He's selling for what I think is way too cheap so I called Matt to check things out for me."

"I...I know boats," Will says, his voice shaking, "If...you don't want to pay for advice."

Matt grins. "He's one of my best customers, I'm not charging him," he says, moving closer and taking a deep breath, "You...you smell great, Will. Just...great."

Will recoils and puts a hand on his belly.

"We're...gonna go inside."

"Hope to see you soon, Will," Matt whispers, winking as they walk away.

Will practically runs inside the house, shaking as Bev comes up behind him. "You ok? I...I didn't know he would be here, I swear."

"It's fine," he lies, "I probably just need something to eat."

Bev growns. "Ok. I'll make you a plate."

He sits at the table with a sigh and tries to calm down.

Matt is weird, a little creepy, but mostly harmless.

Right?

Will suddenly feels an odd sense of dread come over him as Bev comes back with a plate and a glass of juice. He eats fast, starving, and can't help but fight tears.

"Will…"

"I'm sorry," he shakes his head, "I don't know why I...I feel like such a crybaby lately."

Bev takes his hand. "It's ok."

He smiles, squeezing her hand and sniffling. "Where's your Mom?"

"Probably painting out on the back porch."

"Oh."

They're both quiet as Bev finishes her food, and Will drinks three glasses of juice before breakfast is officially over. He still feels oddly shaken as they head for Bev's room, and even when he's sitting on her bed he barely pays much attention.

"Will?"

"Hmm?"

"If you want to go home, that's cool, I don't...want you to feel like you have to stay."

Will blinks, shaking himself. "No, I...I'm sorry. The Matt thing threw me for a loop."

"I can tell."

"You'd think I'd be used to guys hitting on me by now."

They both laugh.

"That wasn't even subtle," Bev says, rolling her eyes, "I mean you're obviously not interested so I don't know why he keeps bothering to try."

Will puts a hand on his belly as he frowns. "I don't know why either."

She sighs. "You know…"

A knock on Bev's door interrupts them. "Bev? Will?"

"Yeah?"

Bev's mom sticks her head in. "Hannibal is here to pick Will up."

They both look at each other. “Um…”

Will pulls out his phone. There’s no messages.

“I can tell him to come back later or…?”

Will stands up fast. “No! I...I’m gonna go,” he says, happy that for once Hannibal’s weird timing is good, “I...I had a good time, Bev...for the most part.”

She smiles. “Me too. Have a good day, Will,” she says, wiggling her eyebrows.

He laughs. “I will.”

Will practically runs down the stairs after and his whole body feels lighter when he sees the Bentley parked in front of Bev’s house. “Thanks for breakfast, Mrs. Katz.”

“You’re welcome sweetie,” she says, beaming, “Have a good day!”

“I will.”

He tries not to run to the car but barely makes it halfway across the lawn before he does, jumping inside and not even saying a word before he’s kissing Hannibal. Hannibal pulls Will into his lap, moaning, and they don’t stop until both of them are breathless. Will is still shaking as he stares at him.

“You’re here.”

Hannibal puts a hand on his cheek. “I felt as if you needed me. Is everything alright?”

Will nods. “Yeah, I...it’s just...Matt was here.”

Hannibal’s eyes darken. “Did he harm you?”

“No, he was just...weird again. Said I smelled good or something, I don’t know. He’s a creep.”

Hannibal makes a noise that’s less of a sigh and more of a growl. “Yes, he is.”

He pulls away from the Katz house and keeps driving but not in the direction of home.

“Where…”

“Your mother is resting,” Hannibal says, “I thought we’d...go for a drive.”

Will lays his head against Hannibal’s shoulder and sighs. “Yeah, that sounds nice.”

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “You’re still shaken.”

“It’s weird to be this freaked out by one person.”

“No, it’s not. Our instincts are the best way to stay out of danger, Will. You should always listen to your instincts.”

He closes his eyes. “Yeah, I guess.”

“You know,” Hannibal says softly, “When I was a boy I narrowly escaped a man who I believe would’ve killed me if I hadn’t listened to mine.”

Will frowns. “Wow, did you tell the police or…?”

“I gave a description, yes,” Hannibal says, turning down a road Will doesn’t recognize, “But no one ever saw him again. More than likely he died in some mishap or another.”

Will squeezes his hand. “Good.”

Hannibal hums a bit of that song Will loves and he feels warm all over.

“I...would not normally do this...but…”

He pulls over in the middle of the woods and turns to Will. “What?”

Hannibal pulls Will in for a kiss that steals his breath, and he climbs into his lap. He wants more, needs more, and Hannibal groans as Will grinds down on his obvious hardness. “Will…”

“People...might see.”

“Not here.”

The doors lock as Will watches Hannibal free his cock, and pulls off everything below his waist before sinking down on him. He moans, smashing their mouths together, and begins to ride Hannibal fast as the need seems to overtake him.

Hannibal digs nails into Will’s back, thrusting up with each move Will makes, and soon Will whimpers as he spills across Hannibal’s shirt while Hannibal keeps on fucking him.

“Sorry, sorry,” he gasps, “I…”

“Never be sorry,” Hannibal growls, staring at him with a need that Will feels in his bones, “Not with me.”

He thrusts up twice more and comes inside Will, biting into Will’s neck again. Will bites back, unable to help himself, and they nuzzle each other after. Will hugs him tight.

“I...I…”

“Yes,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, “Yes.”

Will lays his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, not moving, and feels like everything is right again. Hannibal runs fingers through his hair and hums while Will hums a little too.

He feels a sudden weird rumble in his belly and smiles. “I think I might be hungry again.”

Hannibal nuzzles his ear. “That can be remedied.”

Will laughs. “We can’t go back to the house like this, Leanne…”

“...is sound asleep, Will. She wouldn’t hear a plane crash if it were outside the window.”

He giggles and lifts his head. “Why is that so funny?”

Hannibal smiles. “I don’t know, but...I’m happy to see you smiling.”

“Your dick is in my ass, why wouldn’t I be?”

He runs a hand across Will’s cheek. “You are...the most beautiful creature I’ve ever laid eyes on.”

Will blushes. “No, I’m not.”

“Yes, Will,” Hannibal says softly, “You are.”

He kisses him. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

They both sigh. “We should go get cleaned up.”

“Yes, I suppose so.”

Will frowns and climbs off him, hating the separation. He sits down and pulls up his shorts without bothering to get his underwear on again. Hannibal fixes his own clothes, wiping off whatever he can off Will’s passion, and drives out of the woods turning back in the opposite direction.

“Would you like to go on the boat with me after we shower? We can have lunch, perhaps do some swimming, and spend the day together.”

He smiles. “Yeah, I...yes.”

“Excellent.”

He takes Hannibal’s hand in his as they drive and closes his eyes, laying on his shoulder again.

“That guy,” he says, “The one who tried to kill you when you were a kid. Do you really think he died somewhere? Maybe he just ran off so no one could find him.”

“I’m almost certain,” Hannibal says, his voice a soothing sound that makes Will’s whole body calm, “Men like that don’t live long happy lives.”

“Maybe Matt won’t either,” Will says.

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “I’m sure he won’t, Will. People like him...walk a dangerous line that even they don’t often see. A line I feel this Matt is dangerously close to the edge of.”

The very idea fills Will with a horrible satisfaction. “Good.”

Chapter 28

They turn back around when they get to the end of the block and Will can almost feel the water getting closer as they drive. He feels calm again just being near Hannibal, and tries not to think about what that might mean.

Their differences far outweigh their similarities, he knows that, and whatever feelings he has for Hannibal might get more intense because of his major one. He frowns, staring at his hands, and worry comes without warning.

He doesn't want to hurt Hannibal, not for anything, but...what if he does?

His transformation into the same type of blue finned monster his creature in the lake is could end in him hurting Hannibal someday.

Will puts two hands on his belly and blinks back tears.

"Will? Is something the matter?"

He turns his head against Hannibal's shoulder. "It's nothing," he lies, "I'm just tired."

"We can stay in, if you'd like?"

"No, I'm...I'll be fine."

Will is quiet the whole ride home, and pushes down all the negative thoughts again when they pull up to the house. He knows himself, he does, and if things get to the point where he feels like he doesn't...there's always someone else he can go to that makes him feel safe.

He gets out of the car without waiting for Hannibal and goes right to the shower, eager to wash off any lingering scents of Matt that might've clung to him. The minute he gets under the ice cold spray his body hums, changing with ease, and he soaps himself up washing things away before Hannibal even comes into the bathroom.

"I see you've started without me."

Will stares at his hands, willing himself to shift again, and to his surprise he does. Hannibal pulls back the curtain and he smiles. "I couldn't wait."

Hannibal puts a hand under the water. "It's still quite tepid."

"I like it cold," Will says honestly, "But you can wait if you don't."

He climbs in after Will and pulls Will close, kissing his neck. "I'm sure you can keep me warm."

Will rubs his ass against Hannibal's cock and turns to kiss him softly.

“We can keep each other warm.”

“And dirty.”

Will grins. “Eager to be in me again so soon?”

He can feel Hannibal’s cock grow harder against his ass and the cool water can’t stop his body from filling with heat. “Yes.”

“You just...were in me.”

“I need to feel you again.”

Will sighs. “I need you too.”

Hannibal turns him against the tile wall and thrusts in fast. Will groans and Hannibal kisses him as he starts to move. His belly feels hot as Hannibal pumps into him, and bites on his tongue when Hannibal goes harder. His body aches as his orgasm hits, barely coming much at all, but the pleasure is just as intense when Hannibal follows spilling inside him. Hannibal wraps his arms around Will, hands tight to Will’s belly, and sucks marks all over his neck.

“That’s...I’ve never…”

He lifts his head and smiles. “Never what?”

“Come again so soon,” Will laughs, “We just…”

“You were just as eager for me as I am for you, Mielasis,” Hannibal purrs, kissing him again, “It’s not quite so uncommon.”

Will smiles. “So you just...never have to stop yourself?”

“Not with you.”

He beams and touches Hannibal’s cheek as the water spills down his back. “Good answer.”

“It’s the truth.”

Will kisses him again. “That’s good for the future, I guess,” he teases, “You’ll never grow sick of me.”

“Never.”

They bathe slowly after, Will running his hands down Hannibal’s skin as it tints blue, and finds that Hannibal brought their bathing suits for the boat to change. He puts on his trunks and watches Hannibal do the same.

“Are we even gonna bother pretending to fish again?”

“No, I don’t think we need to today.”

He grins. “Good.”

Hannibal puts together food and drinks before they head toward the dock. Will has to stop himself from jumping into the lake the closer they get near, oddly mesmerized by it, and sits in the passenger’s seat while Hannibal stocks the fridge.

“How long till she wakes up?”

“Does it matter?”

“It does if she’s gonna throw a fit when we get back.”

He walks over to Will and kisses him. “Everything will be fine.”

Will finds it hard not to believe him.

The minute they speed off onto the water he again wishes he never had to go back again. This is his home, he can feel it, and as he stares out at the crystal clear blue he frowns.

“That is not a happy look,” Hannibal says, grabbing his hand.

“I just...I like it here a lot,” he sighs, “Maybe too much.”

“I do as well.”

“Maybe someday we can just...live on a boat or something.”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “Or something.”

Will smiles. “Ignore me, I’m being weird.”

“As if I could ignore you.”

He blushes and looks out again, hoping not to see his creature. The last time he saw him things...had happened he didn’t expect nor should he even want now. Will’s not sure he could resist the creature if he saw him again. He looks at Hannibal’s profile and frowns.

Hannibal deserves someone whose whole heart is his, and Will knows right now he’s still confused. How he could feel this way about a weird sea creature when Hannibal was just so perfect was beyond him but it was what it was.

The boat gets parked in their private area, away from prying eyes, and Will lays down on the floor again staring up at the sun. Hannibal joins him, nuzzling Will’s neck and they both just enjoy the private time.

“Your melancholy mood….” Hannibal says, kissing his cheek, “Is it because of your...secret paramour?”

Will frowns. “That’s…”

“I know you have a connection with someone that isn't this Matt person, Will. You told me yourself some days ago. I will not fault you for being young and...having feelings.”

He closes his eyes. “I don’t...it’s not...feelings,” he sighs, “It’s...a pull.”

“And you don’t feel this pull with me?”

Will turns to his side and sighs. “I do, that’s why it’s so weird.”

Hannibal stares at him with so much intensity Will almost feels him even before he touches his cheek. “You’ve been intimate?”

“I don’t...I don’t want to talk about this.”

“As you wish,” Hannibal says, turning on his side as well, “Let’s talk about something more important.”

He frowns. “Like?”

“Your mother.”

Will moves to stand but Hannibal takes his hand. “Will…”

“You go from wanting to talk about my secret lover to talking about my homicidal mom? I thought we were supposed to have a GOOD time?”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “We are.”

“Then why even bring Leanne up at all?”

“Because I sleep in her bed but feel nothing for her,” Hannibal whispers, “I ache for you and I cannot have you in front of prying eyes. Will, we need to talk about her because she is the only reason we crossed paths in the first place.”

Will’s bottom lip quivers. “I hate her.”

“I know, Mielasis. I know.”

“Why can’t...I can just go home and you can...move to Louisiana and…”

“Will…”

“We could be happy!” Will says, climbing on top of him, “You….”

Hannibal shakes his head. “This time is important, Will,” Hannibal sighs, “It’s...I….”

“Why? Why...Leanne said she didn’t even want me and you kept pushing her and…”

He pulls Will down into a kiss that makes him moan, their tongues tasting each other fast as he makes it deeper. Will feels tears on his cheeks as Hannibal rolls him again, and soon is lost in the moment. He’s never felt like this before, never craved, and the more he has the more he

so desperately needs. They kiss for far too long, only breaking when Will realizes he probably should, and he stares up at him.

“I feel like you’re not telling me everything,” Will whispers, a tear spilling down his cheek, “I…”

Hannibal wipes the tear away with his thumb. “I know.”

“I’m not a baby,” he says, “I...I can handle anything.”

He sighs, lying on the boat’s floor again, and pulling Will to his chest.

“I want to tell you a story.”

“About this?”

“No,” Hannibal whispers, “About my family.”

Will breathes in deep and nuzzles his neck. “Tell me.”

“My family lived near this lake for a very long time,” Hannibal says, running his fingers through Will’s hair, “And...we were happy, happier than most, but there were those who wanted to ruin that happiness.”

“Why?”

“Because they thought things of us that were simply not true,” Hannibal whispers, his voice shaking, “Things...that...made them come in the night and attempt to kill us all.”

Will lifts his head. “Hannibal…”

He blinks back tears as he smiles at Will. “I survived,” he says, touching Will’s face with both hands, “And I found each and every one of them so justice could be served.”

Will’s vision blurs as he looks into his eyes. “You killed them?”

“Yes.”

“How many?”

“Three.”

Will’s teeth feel heavy in his mouth. “How old were you?”

“Younger than I should’ve been,” Hannibal all but growls, his skin darkening, “I…” he pulls Will down to his chest hard, and his body feels cooler than it did moments ago, “I...I cannot lose you, Will. I’ve...only just found you and...I fear that if you leave…”

Will closes his eyes. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Do you promise me?”

“Yes, I...where else would I go?” Will whispers, hugging him, “You’re...I...I get it. I get all of it. You did what you had to do, and...they’d be proud of you for who you are now.”

Hannibal’s hands tighten at his back and his chest hurts.

“We are very fortunate to have found each other, Mielasis,” he whispers, “Very, very fortunate.”

“I know.”

“I don’t think you know just how much,” Hannibal sighs, “Not yet.”

Will feels his stomach feel weird suddenly and he smiles. “Is it too soon to have lunch? My stomach is doing somersaults.”

Hannibal laughs. “No, I don’t think it is.”

Hannibal stands and walks to the mini fridge while Will watches him move. His skin looks darker blue than normal but it’s still beautiful to Will even as it seems to fade. He feels special being able to see Hannibal so vulnerable.

“I took the liberty of making extra,” Hannibal says, coming to sit on the floor again, “You said you were quite famished so I…”

Will takes what looks like a sandwich from him fast and eats without even bothering to see what it is. He moans, grabbing another, and Hannibal beams at him even as he blushes.

“Sorry,” he mumbles, mouth still full, “ ‘m hungry.”

“I know, Will, it’s perfectly fine.”

He ends up eating three sandwiches, peanut butter strawberry by the looks of the aftermath, and drinking to bottles of water. “Are you gonna have some?”

“I’m not hungry yet, no,” Hannibal says, putting away the rest, “Perhaps later.”

Will rubs his belly as the food seems to settle, and he licks his lips.

“Is it too soon to go into the water? Doctors usually say you should wait till after you eat.”

“That is a bit of a myth,” Hannibal says, smiling, “We can swim, if you’d like.”

Will is standing up even before he finishes, and smiles. “Can you catch me this time?”

“I’m sure I can.”

“We’ll see.”

He jumps into the water and speeds off fast. His belly feels hot as he tries to hide, slipping in past a tumble of leaves growing on the lake’s edge. Will feels his lower half shift as he waits,

shaking, and looks around for movements underwater but finds none. He closes his eyes tight and wills himself to shift back.

Not now.

His body seems to listen as he feels the change this time, and before he can really enjoy his new control he's pulled underwater.

Will knows it's Hannibal by touch alone, and kisses him the minute they're face to face. He digs his claws into Hannibal's back, happy to be found so soon, and when they resurface they keep on kissing.

He wraps his legs around Hannibal's waist and hums, smiling against his mouth when Hannibal hums back the song permeating through Will's whole body. Hannibal pulls back, smiling, and Will can't help but laugh.

"You found me."

"I always will."

Will kisses him again. "Is this...one of those...times when you...don't have to stop?"

"Do you want me inside you, Will?"

His teeth feel heavy in his mouth as he nods, vision almost crimson, and Hannibal smiles.

"Then you had better get to the boat first."

"What?"

Hannibal drops him fast and goes under so fast Will has to collect himself before following. He can't help but cheat, shifting as he swims, and makes it to the boat first jumping over and taking off everything. He lays on his belly, the warm air making his skin cool, and when he hears Hannibal's footsteps he feels wet all over.

"So eager for me," Hannibal growls, kneeling down, "Aren't you?"

"Yes," Will sighs, "I…"

"Shhh…"

He comes up behind Will and presses a finger inside him making Will whimper.

"So warm," Hannibal whispers, "You're almost ready."

"Hannib---"

Hannibal leans in and licks at Will's hole, making him moan. "Oh fuck, oh…"

He shoves his tongue inside him, making Will clutch hard at the boat's floor, and the relentless tongue fucking that begins has Will in tears. He needs more, craves everything, but

it feels so good he never wants to stop.

“Please,” he cries, “Please, I…”

Hannibal kisses his backside, biting at his skin, and Will groans.

“I need you,” he begs, “Hannibal, I can’t...I can’t come without…”

“Yes you can.”

Hannibal begins again, faster this time, and Will’s whole body feels like it’s on fire. He covers his mouth to keep from screaming, meeting every thrust back against Hannibal’s tongue, and when his orgasm is finally ripped from him he comes so hard his vision blurs. He’s shaking when Hannibal pulls his tongue away, pressing two fingers in after it, and Will can barely hold his head up he’s so worn out.

“You’re ready.”

“Hannibal…”

“I’m not done yet, Will,” he whispers, “I promise.”

He teases his cock against Will’s hole and Will whimpers, pressing back as weakly as he can.

“Are you like this with your paramour?” he asks, his voice a growl now.

“I…”

“Would you let him take you, Will? Would you…let him feel you like this?”

Will can’t find words as Hannibal thrusts inside him, and he turns to move his head only for Hannibal to stop him. His cock feels larger than usual, thicker, and Will moans desperate for more.

“I...I need you,” he moans, “I want you, I don’t…”

Hannibal digs his nails into Will’s sides as he fucks him, grunting as doesn’t seem to stop, and Will’s belly aches with anticipation. He needs it, wants it so bad, and when Hannibal finally bites into the back of his neck he covers his mouth to muffle out a scream when he’s filled again.

“Mine,” Hannibal growls, licking at the wound, “You’re mine, all…”

Will hums happily, shaking as Hannibal keeps coming, and when he collapses on Will’s back he kisses the mark he left behind.

“I’m sorry, Will,” he whispers, “I don’t know what came over me.”

He smiles back at him. “Don’t be sorry, that…”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “My jealousy is...nothing short of...insane. I have no business having such feelings.”

Will frowns. “It’s ok.”

He wraps his arms around Will and sighs. “No, it is not.”

They lay there in silence, basking in the afterglow, and Will finds it hard to stay awake.

“If I fall asleep, wake me up in an hour.”

Hannibal kisses his neck again. “I will.”

He feels his eyes growing heavier the longer they lay this close but doesn’t want to move, not for anything. “Would you...still want me if I was...different?” he asks.

“How so?”

“If I looked different, or…” he yawns, “If I wasn’t me.”

“I would want you in any form and in every lifetime, Mielasis. Always.”

Will smiles as he falls asleep. “I thought so. I’d want you too,” he whispers, “No matter what.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek and the last thing he hears is strange.

“I hope that’s true, Will. I very much hope that’s true.”

Chapter 29

“Will,” Hannibal whispers, kissing Will’s cheek, “It’s time to wake up.”

Will opens his eyes slowly and smiles when he sees Hannibal’s face. “Hey.”

“Hello,” he says, frowning as he touches Will’s cheek, “How are you feeling?”

He sighs. “I’m fine, just a little sore probably from lying on the floor.”

Hannibal’s frown deepens. “I’m sorry for my actions earlier, it was quite uncalled for to act that way and I know--”

“What? No, I’m...no it’s fine. I’m not upset.”

“You should be.”

Will wraps his arms around Hannibal’s neck. “I get jealous of my *Mom*, so…” he laughs, “It’s fine, ok?”

“It most certainly is *not*, but...I will take your word that you’re unhurt.”

“I *liked* it,” Will whispers, kissing him, “I like *you*.”

Hannibal smiles. “I like you as well, Will. I...care for you a great deal.”

Will feels his whole body fill with warmth and his heart beats faster. “Hannibal…”

“I’m very selfish in my want for you, Will, and...at times...it makes…”

A scream makes them both freeze and Will sits up, staring out at the open water and seeing nothing.

“I don’t…”

Hannibal pulls on his swim trunks and Will does the same, shaking as he waits for another scream to come.

“Perhaps, someone was just having fun with friends.”

“It didn’t sound fun,” Will whispers, “We should drive around and just make sure no one’s hurt.”

“Will…”

He turns to frown. “What?”

“If someone sees us alone together on the boat with no fishing gear or excuse whatsoever…”

“So we’re just gonna leave someone who might be hurt out in the water?”

“I’m sure we’re not the only ones who heard them.”

Will walks to the edge of the boat and puts one leg over. “Then I’ll go look by myself.”

“What? No! Will..”

He moves to jump over but Hannibal is suddenly there, grabbing him tight. “Let me go!”

“We’ll drive around,” he sighs, “It’s the least we can do.”

“Thank you.”

Hannibal lets Will go and they both sit in the regular seats, buckling up before he restarts the boat. They drive around for almost an hour and hear no other screams. Will feels like if he just got in the water he’d find something but just looks out.

“Maybe it was just someone playing around after all,” he sighs, “Thanks for looking at least.”

“You’re welcome. Are you still hungry? Thirsty? I have strawberry parfaits along with more juice.”

Will’s stomach growls and he blushes, putting both hands on his belly. “I guess I am.”

Hannibal takes the boat back to their spot, away from prying eyes, and Will can’t help but look out at the water again. He feels like he’s missing something important.

“Will?”

He looks at Hannibal. “Yeah?”

“Are you alright? You still seem troubled.”

“It’s nothing, I’m fine.”

“We can go searching more after we eat, if that would make you feel better.”

Will shakes his head. “No, I’m...it’s fine.”

They eat their yogurt sitting on the floor again and though Will still feels hungry after he doesn’t say anything. He lays his head back against Hannibal’s chest and sighs when Hannibal puts a hand over his stomach. “Would you like to go swimming again?”

“I’m ok.”

“We could--”

“Let’s just...do this,” Will whispers, closing his eyes, “I just...I like being with you. I don’t think I’ve ever felt as good as I do when I’m with you.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “That is a very high compliment, Will. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

They’re quiet again for some time, listening to the sounds of the water and if Will tries he can hear people far away from them. He touches the scratches on his arms and feels warmer than he should.

“Your paramour,” Hannibal asks, making Will tense, “Does he make you feel any level of goodness?”

“Hannibal…”

“I’m not trying to upset you, Will.”

“Then why even ask?”

“Because I want to know the answer.”

Will glares at him. “Maybe I don’t want to give you one.”

“I have no claim over you, Will,” he sighs, “I know that.”

The words sting in a strange way, like he’s being rejected, and Will blinks back tears. “So...if this isn’t...if what we’re doing isn’t you having any claim over me, then what are we even doing?”

“That’s not what I…”

Will shakes his head. “That’s what you said, Hannibal, so if it isn’t what you meant…” he puts his hands on his belly, “...if you have no claim over me then why do you care if someone else does?”

Hannibal clenches his jaw. “I don’t subscribe to outdated views of romantic partners, Will. If this is to continue we will be equals. If we decide that this is...more than the summer...then we will belong to each other, yes, but I have no superiority over you. I…” he takes Will’s hands in his, “...want us to be two halves of one whole. Do you understand?”

Will can hardly see through his tears as he nods. “Yes, yes, I…”

He falls into Hannibal’s arms, smashing their mouths together in a frenzied hunger that has his whole body aching. Hannibal pulls Will up onto his lap, his nails digging into Will’s back in the best way, and when they part for breath Hannibal’s skin is just slightly blue.

“No,” Will whispers, touching Hannibal’s face, “He doesn’t.”

Hannibal smiles. “I see.”

“But...I feel safe with him, and I can be myself without…”

“Will,” Hannibal frowns, “You know you can be yourself with me. There’s nothing you can do or say that would turn me away.”

He closes his eyes. “Not yet,” he says, laying his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, “I’m not…”

Hannibal runs fingers through his hair. “Whenever you’re ready,” he whispers, “I’ll be waiting.”

They end up falling asleep together not even an hour later, lying on the floor of the boat like before and just basking in the closeness that Will wishes he could feel all the time. There’s no other screams like before, not even when Will strains to hear them, and when they finally pull up to the dock hours later it’s almost eerily quiet.

“You think she’s awake?”

“There is only one way to find out.”

The house is completely dark when they step inside, so much so that they turn on lights as they go, and Will gives Hannibal one more kiss before heading to the bathroom. He’s had a long day, really too long, and takes a long shower before going to his room to change for dinner.

Will flips on his bedroom light and freezes when he sees Leanne sitting on his bed.

“Um…”

She looks a little less gray, but still pale, and her eyes are bloodshot.

“What are you doing in my room?”

Leanne doesn’t move, or say anything though she looks him up and down with a sneer. Will feels scared now and steps back slightly. “Leanne, what…”

“Leanne.”

Will turns around fast and there’s Hannibal right behind him, his gaze darker than Will’s ever seen it be.

“How did you get here so fast?”

Hannibal gently moves Will out of his way and steps into the bedroom. He’s still wearing his swim trunks, and when he kneels down in front of Leanne Will can’t help but stare at his bare skin.

“What’s wrong with her?”

“Leanne,” Hannibal says again, taking Leanne’s hands in his, “Look at me, Darling.”

She looks at him and seems to deflate at once, smiling as she kisses him. Hannibal doesn’t push her away and Will has to stand there, seething as he watches.

Hannibal finally breaks the kiss and stands up again, holding his hand out in invitation.

“Come with me.”

Leanne giggles, grasping his hand in hers, and when they come close she looks normal again.

“You got some sun today, huh Will? Lookin’ good.”

Will watches in shock as Hannibal leads her down the hall toward the dining room and walks back into his bedroom locking the door. He sits down on the bed in his towel, completely confused.

“What the fuck?”

He falls back on the bed and tries to wrap his head around all that.

Instantly his mind flashes back to middle school.

There was a big assembly in the auditorium for all grades one day where a magician came to show some magic. Will had never been a big fan of things like magic, but the magician ended up hypnotizing their Principal into acting like a dog running around the stage. He remembers laughing so hard he could hardly breathe.

And there had been a magic word.

Umbrella.

The Principal had immediately stopped running around and looked embarrassed.

Will was almost sure back then that it was all fake.

But what he just saw seems almost too real.

He grabs his cell phone and goes to text Bev.

DID YOU SEE THE NEWS ABOUT THE BODY?

WILL ANSWER ME!

WILL!

Will suddenly feels ice cold.

No, we were out on the boat all day. What happened?

The phone rings and he answers immediately.

“Oh my god!” Bev says, “I can’t believe you don’t know!”

“Bev, just tell me!”

“They found a guy dead in the lake this afternoon. His name was Troy something? He must’ve been swimming alone and just...got attacked. The police think it was an alligator, just like

Will sits up fast. *“What?”*

“Just like Britney!”

He runs his hands over the scratch marks on his arms and closes his eyes.

“Will?”

“I’m here.”

“You’re surprisingly not freaked out about this.”

He puts one hand on his belly and shakes his head even though she can’t see. *“Sorry, I’m just...shocked.”*

“Mom says I can’t go in the lake for the rest of the summer, which is stupid because honestly the chances of me getting attacked by anything are a million to one.”

“You...should listen to her,” he whispers, *“Stay safe, Bev.”*

“Will?”

“I have to go. Thanks for bringing me up to speed.”

“Will, wait! I wa---”

He tosses his phone down on the table and dresses in a daze.

Could they have saved that guy?

He’d heard the scream right away, so maybe---

Will shakes his head.

No, it probably wouldn’t have mattered. Especially if the one that killed Troy was who he thought it might be.

The green fin creature.

Will puts his hands on his neck and squeezes tightly as he stares at himself in the mirror. What was the difference between the two creatures and could he end up being like either of them? He sighs and pulls out his phone to search for details of Troy’s death.

He types in Troy, murder, alligator, and is struck by what comes up in the search results.

There’s four articles already, short blurbs, but they all have the same picture.

Troy is young, handsome, and looks very much like him.

Will blinks.

He feels his heart beat wildly in his chest as he scrolls the page, and is shaking when there's a knock at the door. "Y...yeah?"

"May I come in?"

Will opens the door and Hannibal walks right in seeming oddly frantic. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Will lies, "I was just…"

He puts both hands on Will's cheeks and frowns down at him. "Will, tell me."

"There's a body," Will says, his voice shaking, "They found it in the lake and…he…he looks like me."

"What?"

He lifts the phone up to Hannibal whose eyes shine red in the lights of the room.

"No," he says, the one word almost a growl, "*No*."

"Hannibal?"

Hannibal throws the phone down on the dresser and tightens his hold on Will, breathing in and nuzzling his neck.

"H…"

"I don't want you to go back into the water," Hannibal says, his voice so soft Will can hardly hear.

"What?" he asks, pulling back, "What do you…"

"It's too dangerous," Hannibal says, still frowning as he touches Will's face, "I cannot lose you, Will. I…"

"You're not...I'm fine," Will whispers, "I...I'm fine. The odds of me getting attacked by...whatever got him are pretty low. I'll be ok."

"Will…"

Will kisses him and smiles. "It's fine," he repeats, not even sure if he believes that, "I'll be fine."

Hannibal sighs. "If you won't agree to stay out of the water, then at the very least do not go in alone."

He nods, even though he's not sure that's a good idea either. "Okay."

“Thank you,” Hannibal says, “Dinner will be ready soon, I must get back to it.”

“Leanne, is she…?”

“She’s just fine.”

Will frowns. “Okay.”

Hannibal kisses him again. “I will see you at dinner.”

He watches him go, still uneasy, and walks to the window to look out at the water. The water seems almost black in the moonlight, shining as it calls to him, and Will puts a hand on the glass.

How can the water be such a sense of comfort to him one minute and terror the next?

It isn’t fair.

Will sighs as he heads for the door only for his cell to ring again. He frowns when he sees who it is.

“Dad?”

“Oh so you DO *remember me.”*

He scratches his head. *“I...um...I’ve been busy.”*

“Oh, so it’s like that?”

Will sits on the bed. *“Kinda?”*

His dad laughs and Will’s eyes fill with tears.

Was he even still his Dad anymore?

“....and she said to tell you hello, but...Will?”

He shakes himself, sniffling. *“Sorry, I was...what?”*

“Somethin’ on your mind, Son?”

‘Everything,’ Will wants to say.

‘Would you still love me if you found out I wasn’t yours?’

But instead he just sighs. *“It’s nothing. I just...I miss you.”*

“I miss you too, Kid, the house isn’t the same without you.”

Will watches the tears fall onto his hand and can barely see when it shifts. The familiar webbing of his fingers makes him bite back a sob. *“Dad...I…I don’t know what I’m doing*

here. Things...are just so..."

"Do you want to come home, Will? Just say the word."

He wills his hand to shift back and sighs. *"No, I….I need to finish the summer."*

His Dad sighs. *"Damn that woman. I never should've let her stay after she…"*

Will sniffles. *"After she what?"*

His Dad is quiet. *"Nothin' you need to hear about, Will," he says, his voice thick, "Just...have fun. Okay? Don't let the bullshit get you down."*

Will smiles. *"Okay, Dad.*"

"I love you, Will."

"I love you too, Dad."

"Don't be a stranger, you hear me?"

He sniffles. *"Okay."*

"Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

Will ends the call, stuffing the phone in his pocket, and his stomach suddenly growls so loud it makes him laugh. He pats his belly. "I'll get us something to eat, ok?" he jokes.

Hannibal should've gotten him by now, which is weird, but maybe he got caught up in cooking. Will walks out into the hall and heads toward the amazing scent, but frowns when he hears something else.

"Leanne…darling...stop this."

Leanne moans and a sound like a pan falling makes him rear back.

"You...want me…I know you want me...I'm…"

Another moan makes Will see red and he stares at his hands suddenly filled with claws. He rushes toward the door, not caring in the slightest, and runs out into the night.

He imagines Hannibal touching Leanne with tears streaming down his cheeks, and tears off his clothes before he jumps into the water. Will needs to feel anything but this, and swims toward the only one who he knows can make him forget.

Chapter 30

He's aching all over by the time he gets to the cave, vision still red, and hits the surface sobbing against the rocks.

"LIAR!" he growls, scratching so hard his claws hurt.

Lies.

It was all lies.

"Where are you?" he yells, staring around the cave, "I NEED YOU! WHERE ARE YOU?"

There's no response at all around him, not even underwater, and his yell is cut off in a sob as he lays across the rocks. He stares at his webbed fingers, the red tint in his eyes making his blue skin look almost purple, and his teeth feel heavy in his mouth as dark thoughts fill his head.

He wants to hurt someone.

Anyone.

Will angrily goes under the water and rushes toward the exit but a blue blur rushes by, grabbing and stopping him. He growls, fighting to get away, but the creature pulls him to the surface fast. They snap their teeth at each other and Will growls. "LET ME GO!"

The blue fin's eyes narrow as its hold tightens, turning him against the rock wall around them, and it growls. The growl makes Will's whole body warm, and he can feel the creature's desire against his bare skin.

He relaxes in the creature's arms, tears streaming down his face, and arches back against the hardness behind him. "*Please*," he begs, feeling the shift start to go up his arms, "*Please, please, please*!"

The creature runs its tongue across Will's neck and he whimpers, shaking as it licks over Hannibal's bite.

"Pl…"

Will knows he should feel some kind of pain when the creature thrusts into him but he only feels pleasure, moaning as he's filled. He arches back and the creature preses its mouth to his, its long tongue almost choking Will who only wants more. Will's can feel his body change as the creature continues, fucking him hard yet oddly tender against the rocks with a hand over his belly. He can feel his orgasm near and screams when he comes the first time, spilling into the water while the creature continues.

"More...more..m…"

His mouth feels strange, he knows he's changing, but it's like breathing air he didn't even know he was missing. Will never wants to stop, thoughts of Hannibal gone, and when the creature's cock grows longer as he moves Will's greedy to feel it spill inside him.

"Oh god...oh…"

The creature bites down hard on the back of his neck and Will comes again, feeling his fin growing as he spills, and he knows he's gonna pass out soon from this pleasure. He feels something growing out of his lower back and growls, turning his head again.

The creature's red eyes stare at him in adoration, nuzzling against his now shifted face, and Will has never been so happy. "Mine," he growls, shoving himself back on the creature's cock, "Mine, mine…"

He's bitten again over Hannibal's bite and feels the creature's cock tighten inside him before it fills him up. Will sobs, his vision blurring, and the last thing he feels is the creature licking his face as it hums a song Will feels he knows but can't quite remember.

Will wakes up naked on the dock, shivering, and stares out at the water.

He wants to go back.

He's sore all over but it's the right kind of sore, and he nearly jumps in again when a voice stops him.

"Will!"

Will doesn't turn around, instead sits down on the dock and stares out at the water as Hannibal covers him with a towel.

"I was so worried," he says, "Here, let me…"

"*Don't touch me.*"

Hannibal pulls his hands back. "Will?"

"I heard you," he hisses, struggling to keep his eyes from changing as he blinks back tears, "I heard her, I know you...you were…"

Hannibal turns Will around abruptly and touches his cheek. "You think I would be inside her again after we'd made love? That I would sully our...you think so little of me?"

Will shakes his head. "I HEARD HER! I…"

Hannibal puts two hands on Will's face. "Your mother was being overly aggressive in her desperation for me to fuck her," he whispers, "I had to sedate her or otherwise I would've hurt her. I made *no* sexual advances in return to her desperate attempts. She is *nothing*. You are *everything*."

Will feels tears fall down his face. "But…"

“Will…I will *never* be with anyone other than you in that way again.”

He’s the worst person on Earth.

Hannibal hadn’t fucked Leanne.

But Will let the creature fuck him, and he’d loved every second of it.

He falls into Hannibal’s arms, sobbing, and struggles to stay human as Hannibal’s arms come around him.

“Shhh…”

“I’m sorry,” he cries, gripping him tight, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m---”

Hannibal kisses his cheeks one by one, nuzzling against them, and Will breathes in the scent of him.

“No apologies are necessary,” Hannibal whispers, running his hands down Will’s back, “Don’t cry, Will. I hate to see you cry.”

He closes his eyes tight. “But I...I…”

“You, *what* Mielasis?”

Will lets out a sob before he whispers, “I...I did.”

Hannibal is quiet. “You did *what*, Will?”

He lifts his head up and stares into Hannibal’s eyes. “I was with someone in that way.”

The horror he expects isn’t there.

“I know.”

“How do you---”

Hannibal puts one hand on Will’s shoulder and another on the back of his neck. “You did not have these bites before. They’re quite fresh. Your paramour was...amorous.”

“You’re not upset.”

“I’m disappointed,” Hannibal sighs, “But you followed your instincts in a time of anger and I cannot fault you for that. Though your paramour is still quite rough in his passionate pursuits.”

Will grabs his hand. “You’re not mad?”

“No, Will,” he says, smiling sadly, “You thought it the best way to get back at me. Though I would ask that you still refrain from going into the lake without me again, it’s unsafe. This time you were not alone but next…”

He wipes the tears off his face. “I know, I...I’m sorry.”

Hannibal touches his cheek and smiles. “I know, Mielasis, and I forgive you.”

Will climbs into his lap, the towel falling, and Hannibal wraps his arms around him again.

“Thank you.”

Hannibal rubs his back and kisses Will’s cheek. “Now, I think it’s time for you to rest.”

“No, I…”

“You need to eat first, but yes I think it’s time for you to rest.”

Will picks up the towel and stands watching Hannibal do the same. Hannibal holds his hand out for Will to take and he does, the two of them walking into the house together.

“I know you’ve showered once tonight already but you should again,” Hannibal whispers, kissing Will’s hand, “I will get you something to eat.”

He nods, still shaking, and walks down the hall to the bathroom. The water is cold when Will goes into the shower, washing off the remnants of the lake, and he tries to tell himself he doesn’t want to feel what the creature left inside him longer. Will walks to his room, changes into pajamas, and walks toward the kitchen to find Hannibal in the midst of reheating food for him.

“Feeling better? You can wait in the dining room if you’d like. I…”

Will comes up and hugs him from behind. He doesn’t say a word, only puts his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, and watches him keep cooking.

“I processed the meat and tomatoes myself,” he says, stirring, “And yes normally people would reheat in the microwave oven but it’s much healthier to do so this way.”

He smiles against Hannibal’s neck. “And you like to show off.”

Hannibal smiles as he moves the spaghetti onto a plate and garnishes it. “Perhaps.”

Will sits at the dining room table in his pajamas as Hannibal watches him eat.

“This beef is...really good.”

“I have a butcher in town I use, he’s very...specific about the meat he gives me.”

Will licks his lips as he finishes the last bite. “Mmm...well...he picked some good meat this time.”

Hannibal stands and comes over to take Will’s plate. “Don’t move, I have dessert.”

He shakes his head. “You don’t have to, I’m just f---”

He kisses Will's forehead. "Yes, I do."

Will watches him go with a sigh, his stomach growling once more, and grins. "Aren't we lucky, huh?" he says, patting his belly.

He sighs and puts a hand on the bite on his neck, already close to healing.

Will can almost feel the creature's tongue on his cheek and closes his eyes. He wiggles in his seat, feeling wet left from the shower under him, and his body is already warming up when Hannibal returns.

"Here now," he says, making Will jump up fast, opening his eyes, "I've made your favorite."

It's a strawberry peanut butter parfait.

Will grabs the spoon and digs in, hating the tears he has to hold back, and hopes Hannibal doesn't notice.

There seems no end in sight to this battle between the two sides of himself and he worries he won't be able to resist going back to the blue fin creature again.

"Will…"

He eats so fast he starts to cough, the spoon falling from his hand, and before he can grab it again Hannibal stops him.

"I'm fine, I…"

"What's wrong?"

Will shakes his head. "I…"

"If you're still worried that I'm angry with you there's no need to be."

He frowns. "But…"

Hannibal lets his hand go and pulls back from the table, patting his own lap. "Come here."

Will doesn't hesitate and rushes into his lap, sighing at the feeling of his arms around him.

"Your fears are unwarranted," Hannibal whispers, "As are your tears."

"I don't know what's wrong with me."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "It's alright, I'm here."

He puts his head on Hannibal's shoulder and breathes in the scent he likes so much.

"I wish you would share more of yourself with me, Will. I really do."

Will closes his eyes and doesn't say anything.

“There is no one on this planet I want to share the dark parts of myself with other than you. No one. I find it hard not to just...tell you everything.”

Will sniffles. “I...I want to know.”

“I will share it all with you in due time, Will,” he whispers, petting Will’s back, “But now is not the time, especially since you’re so upset.”

He lifts his head and kisses Hannibal softly. “How are you so perfect?”

Hannibal smiles. “I’m not perfect, Mielasis,” he whispers, “No one is. We all make mistakes and have darkness that we want to hide.”

“No,” Will says, smiling, “You are. That’s why Leanne wants to be yours so much, and why Bev’s mom thinks you’re dreamy. You...you’re just perfect.”

Hannibal puts both hands on Will’s cheeks. “No one is as perfect as you.”

Will kisses him again, sighing as Hannibal pulls him closer, and before long he’s so hot he’s almost sweating. Hannibal’s eyes are filled with desire when he breaks their kiss, staring into Will’s eyes. “Will…”

“I need you,” Will whispers, “I…”

He nods as Will stands up, kicking off everything below his waist, and watches as Hannibal frees his cock. Will stares at his cock, only half hard, and something makes him get down on his knees.

“Will, you…”

Will begins to lick, desperate to taste, and Hannibal gently touches the back of his head as he runs his tongue all over. The taste is nothing like Will thought it would be, and Hannibal’s gasps as he begins to suck makes his ass feel wet again. He pulls back with a frown, and touches his backside.

It’s wet there, though the rest of his ass isn’t, and he frowns.

“Will?”

Maybe he’s just wet from before? Is it leftover from the creature?

Will stares at Hannibal’s cock, hard now, and decides not to care.

He needs to feel him.

Hannibal groans when Will positions himself over his cock, sinking down, and begins to move. Will moans when he finds the perfect spot, erratically fucking himself up and down. Hannibal captures his mouth fast as he groans, and wraps his hand around Will’s cock stroking.

Will gasps when he feels his orgasm come on fast, spilling in Hannibal's hand. Hannibal stands up from the chair and begins to fuck him hard as the table rattles. Will's parfait cup falls down, drenching the table in ice cream, and he bites Will's tongue just before he comes moaning in Will's mouth. They lay there, still attached, and pull apart to stare into each other's eyes.

He touches Hannibal's face. "If that didn't wake her up I don't know what will."

Hannibal chuckles. "She won't disturb us, don't worry."

"I wish…"

Hannibal kisses his hand and squeezes. "I know."

They move off the table, and Will watches him go to get something to clean up the mess. He touches his ass when Hannibal leaves but all he feels is Hannibal's come inside him.

He hums and puts one hand on his belly as he closes his eyes.

"Just perfect."

Will opens his eyes when he feels Hannibal watching him, and blushes sitting on the chair. "I was just…"

Hannibal smiles. "I saw what you were doing."

"Shut up."

He watches Hannibal clean up the ice cream. "I've never seen anyone quite so happy to be filled with my passionate leavings before."

Will feels his face get warm. "I was just…"

Hannibal puts the washcloth in the parfait cup and comes over to Will still smiling as he leans down to kiss him softly. "I take it as a compliment, Mielasis, it's...quite nice to see."

Will smiles. "You're so weird."

"I know, which is why it's nice that we can be weird together forever."

He feels his heart beat faster. "You...think we're gonna be together forever?"

Hannibal frowns. "If you'd like to be, yes, but there's no obligation. I was merely…"

Will pulls him down into a kiss and laughs. "I like that idea."

"You...don't think it's too soon to be thinking this way?"

He stands up, grabs his shorts, and shakes his head. "No, I...I like it. I like you. I l…"

A sudden desperate knocking has them both turn.

“Who…?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “Get dressed.”

Will nods and pulls on his shorts after Hannibal leaves, rushing after him just as he opens the door.

“Hi, I know it’s weird but I…I…”

“Bev?”

Bev bursts into tears as Hannibal steps out of the way and Will runs to take her into his arms.

“What’s wrong? What happened?”

They sit on the couch and Hannibal nods once before he leaves for the dining room again.

“I...I’m sorry I just...I don’t have anyone and my parents they…”

“Hey, it’s fine,” Will says, “Just...tell me.”

“Abby broke up with me.”

Will frowns. “Oh. I’m sorry. That sucks.”

She nods and wipes the tears from her face. “I...I tried to call and text but you didn’t answer so I snuck out to come here cuz my parents said I can’t leave at night because of Troy. I know it’s only been a few days, but...I...god Will I really, really thought we had something. It’s probably because of her stupid Dad.”

“Her Dad?”

“Who’s Dad?”

They both turn to see Hannibal coming in with two cups of iced tea. “Thank you,” Bev says, “My girlfriend’s dad, or ex-girlfriend I guess. Abigail Hobbs. Her dad…”

“Garrett,” Hannibal finishes, sitting down on the arm of the couch by Will, “I’ve met him before, he’s very...focused on his family.”

“He’s crazy,” she mumbles, “I think even Abby is afraid of him.”

“I’m sorry for your dating woes, Beverly. If you’d like to stay the night I can make up the guest bedroom or I have a fold out bed that would fit in Will’s room. I could talk with your parents?”

Bev’s lip trembles. “Y...yeah, I...yeah.”

Hannibal smiles. “Excellent. I will return.”

Bev sighs as she lays her head on Will’s shoulder. “You have the best secret boyfriend ever.”

Will laughs. “Yeah, he’s…”

“Perfect.”

He smiles. “Yeah, he is.”

“Why didn’t you pick up your phone?”

“Um….”

Bev giggles. “Ohhh! Did I interrupt? Oh god I hope not!”

He laughs. “No, we were just...talking.”

“Talking is good,” she whispers, “I...I loved talking to Abby, and now…”

“You don’t know that it’s over forever, maybe she’s just afraid of her Dad.”

“Maybe.”

They hear Hannibal on the phone as he comes back into the living room. “Yes,” he says, “Yes. I will drive her in the morning. Yes. Thank you. Goodnight to you both.”

He ends the call and smiles. “Problem solved.”

Bev grins. “I could kiss you right now, Doc. You’re amazing. Thank you.”

“You’re quite welcome, though I will decline the kissing. Your smiling face is enough reward.”

“Oh god you’re just so...great. Isn’t he great?”

Will smiles at him. “Yeah, he is.”

Hannibal smiles back. “And with that...I will bid you both goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight!”

Bev sighs and Will squeezes her hand. “You wanna go watch a movie?”

“I thought you’d never ask.”

They head to Will’s room where Hannibal has set up the rollaway bed already. Bev hugs Will and lays her head on his shoulder. “You lucky jerk.”

“I know.”

The two of them end up staying awake for another couple of hours and Will doesn’t mind when Bev falls asleep beside him. He hugs her tight and smiles.

He really is lucky.

He has a friend who is fast becoming his best and a man who cares about him more than anything. Will ignores the weird green creature who's stalking him, the blue one he can't stop thinking about, the fact that he's a sea monster too, and the mechanic who won't take no for an answer.

Will sighs as he closes his eyes. He really is lucky to have what he does.

He just has to get through the rest of the summer without fucking it up.

Chapter 31

Bev isn't in bed with him or on the rollout when Will wakes up the next morning. He's half awake when he gets dressed and hears voices as he makes his way down the hall.

"...and that was how I successfully infiltrated a circus."

He hears Bev giggle and opens the door to see her sitting with Hannibal over a large breakfast spread.

"Hey sleepyhead," she teases, "What took you so long?"

Will wipes the sleep from his eyes and smiles. "Someone kept me up watching horror movies."

"Guilty," she says, grinning as he bites into a biscuit.

"Beverly was telling me of her aspirations to become a crime scene investigator."

"And *Hannibal* was telling me about how many different jobs he had before he became a doctor. What was it? Eleven?"

"Ten and a half."

Will feels oddly jealous as he sits down but curbs the feeling. Bev has no attraction to Hannibal, he knows that, but her knowing something first before he did doesn't sit right.

"I didn't know that," Will mumbles, grabbing some eggs.

"Well, now you do," Hannibal says.

He looks up and forces a smile. "What were the jobs?"

"Now *that*...I will keep private for now. Beverly does not have to know *everything*."

Bev grins. "But she does know *some* things."

Will blushes and takes a sip of orange juice.

"Did you sleep well, Will?"

"Yeah, I guess."

"You guess? I'll have you know I am the *best* sleep cuddler there is," she mumbles, taking a sip of her drink

He blushes harder. "No," he whispers, "You're *not*. I've had better."

She spits out her juice and Will smiles at Hannibal who smiles back.

“Thank you, WIll.”

Bev wipes her mouth and chin with her napkin. “The two of you are gonna kill me.”

“Never,” Hannibal says, smiling, “You and Will are too good of friends already for that to happen and...you know too much.”

Will and Bev look at each other oddly. “But shouldn’t---”

Hannibal takes a bite of his eggs. “Going through the work to reintroduce another person into our lives would be quite tedious. No, Beverly is here to stay.”

The two of them look at each other again, and then suddenly burst out laughing.

He pats Hannibal’s hand as he giggles. “You’re so weird.”

“Thank you for the compliment.”

They smiled at each other.

Bev sighs. “I miss my girlfriend.”

Will frowns. “I’m sorry.”

“No, no, it’s...you’re fine. We weren’t together that long so I really shouldn’t be this upset.”

“Beverly,” Hannibal says, “If you’d like I could talk to Mr. Hobbs myself.”

“No, I...can’t have you do that.”

“I’m more than happy to help,” Hannibal says, frowning.

“I know, and you’re great for even offering but...I think...I just...gotta get over it.”

“Maybe…”

Bev bites a piece of toast and shakes her head. “No, let’s...just talk about something else.”

“Bev…”

Will looks at Hannibal. “Uh…”

The dining room door suddenly opens and they all look as Leanne steps into the room.

“GOOD MORNING!”

Will’s confused by the sight of her.

She looks fine.

No gray skin, no tired lines, and no signs of any ‘sickness’ she’s been harboring the last few days.

“Good morning,” he says as she walks over to Bev.

“Oh look! Hello! How’re you honey?”

“Um...fine?”

“That’s great! Can you move over one seat so I can sit next to my honey? Thanks.”

Will glares as Bev does just that, and Leanne sits across from him. She reaches out to touch Hannibal who moves his hand away. “Good morning Leanne.”

“No kiss for me, sweetie?”

“You know I’m not one for public displays, Leanne.”

She pouts. “Fine, be that way.”

Will feels a huge sense of satisfaction when he feels Hannibal’s leg touch his under the table. He runs his foot up and under Hannibal’s pantleg in return and they smile at each other.

“So…”

“Are you and your friend going out today, sweetheart?”

He frowns at Bev. “We’re not sure yet.”

“I’m sure Hanni would let you use the boat by yourselves. Wouldn’t you, Hanni?”

“Yes,” he says, frowning, “Though it’s currently not quite safe for anyone to be out on the water alone after what’s happened to those two teenagers. You never know who could be lurking around.”

Leanne pauses, and Will can see her hand shaking as she picks up a glass.

“I’m sure Will will be fine, won’t you sweetheart? You always *loved* the water, a little water baby you were. You were born to be there, I think sometimes, but your Dad…always so damn protective. It’s why I didn’t have any other kids, you know, men can be…”

Her sudden giggle makes Will shiver.

“Didn’t you not have any other kids because you abandoned your first one?” Will snaps, putting a hand over his belly.

Bev’s eyes widen. “Will…”

Leanne’s sunny demeanor suddenly changes. “Maybe you were just too hard to take care of, Will. Maybe you were just too hard to l---”

Hannibal grabs Leanne's arm and stands, pulling her with him. "Leanne, it's time for you to lie down."

"But I don't want t--"

"I'm sorry, Beverly, for this display. Will, if you'd like to take the boat out on your own, that's just fine but be careful. Have a good day, both of you."

He blinks back tears as he watches them go, and doesn't say a word till they're gone.

"Will?"

Will wipes his face. "I'm fine."

Bev brings over her plate and sets it down right beside Will before pulling him into her arms.

"No, you're not. That...I mean...that was…"

"She's sick."

"No," she scoffs, "She's *horrible*. You should call your Dad and have him come get your or something. I mean...I don't know why you'd even want to st....ohhh."

Bev lifts her head as Will shakes his. "Don't."

"I know you like him, Will, but...is it worth this?"

"I barely see her."

"Okay," she whispers, "I just...you're my friend and I want you to be happy."

Will sighs. "I am happy," he whispers, taking her hand, "For the most part."

Bev squeezes their hands together. "Well, you're more than welcome to sleep a few nights over at my house. I know you'd miss your boyfriend but---"

He smiles. "Thanks, Bev."

They start to eat again and Will replays Leanne's words in his head.

You always loved the water, a little water baby you were. You were born to be there, I think sometimes....

Hannibal had said she didn't remember all that much about Will's conception or birth, but those words make him think otherwise.

Leanne had already thought he was going to hurt her in the water before, and now she was subtly dropping hints at things she wasn't supposed to have any memory of.

Will pops a piece of sausage in his mouth.

“You ok?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you want to go out on the boat? I mean…”

“I just want to get away from here for a while.”

Bev frowns. “Where do you wanna go?”

He shrugs.

“There’s nothing that would cheer you up?”

Will eats the rest of his eggs and the last two pieces of sausage. He rubs his belly and sighs.

“My dad used to take me to the animal shelter when I was feeling bad,” he says, smiling, “That’s how I got my first dog, Buster.”

“I remember you told me about him,” she says, squeezing his hand, “He was like Matt’s dog, right?”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

“There’s a shelter about two miles past the shopping center! We can go pet some dogs, have something greasy to eat, and avoid thinking about all the bad stuff.”

He smiles. “Sounds fun.”

“Ok!” She says, grinning, “You are gonna go change your clothes and drive me home to do the same. Then it’ll be Will and Bev day.”

Will laughs. “Will and Bev day?”

“Yep. Now go get dressed. I am gonna try to put away some stuff cuz…”

The dining room door opens and they both look to see Hannibal return. “You’re still here.”

“Yeah, we were just gonna go out,” Will says, “It’s Will and Bev day apparently.”

Hannibal smiles. “Oh?”

“We’re going to pet some dogs, eat some greasy food, and drive around not thinking about anything bad.”

“That sounds like a very good day. If you’d permit me…”

He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out a wallet.

“No, no, you don’t have—” Will starts to say but Hannibal hands him a wad of cash.

“I insist.”

Will moves to hand it back and Bev grabs his hand.

“Nope! Let the man contribute to Will and Bev day!”

He feels his heart beat faster as Hannibal smiles. “Yes, please.”

“Ok.”

“Now I’m going to pretend to tie my shoes I’m not wearing and whatever happens while I’m looking down is not anything I know about.”

Bev leans down and Will grabs Hannibal by the tie kissing him softly. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

They smile at each other for far too long and only Bev’s fake cough makes Will let him go, blushing when sighs.

“You’re so cute.”

“Now, I will put away breakfast and the two of you enjoy your day.”

Bev smiles. “We definitely will now.”

Will drags her out of the dining room and she sits on the couch while he gets ready. He finds some of the new shorts Hannibal got him just a few days ago and is surprised when they’re a little tight.

Apparently all of Hannibal’s good food is making him gain a little weight. He laughs and pats his belly.

“Don’t get too big, ok? I can’t ask him to keep buying me clothes.”

His stomach feels oddly fluttery in response and he shakes his head. “Nuh uh. We just had breakfast.”

Will grabs Bev’s shoes and heads back.

“I knew that’s where they probably were,” she says, taking the shoes, “Ready?”

He looks back toward the dining room.

“Um…”

Bev rolls her eyes. “Just go.”

Will runs into the dining room and finds it empty, but goes into the kitchen to see Hannibal putting dishes into the dishwasher. “Will?”

He runs at him and smashes their mouths together hard, sighing as Hannibal's fingers dig into his back. It's hard to pull away, his vision slightly pink, but he does.

"I just…wanted to say goodbye."

"Never say goodbye," Hannibal whispers, smiling, "Not to me."

Will grins. "What am I supposed to say then?"

"See you later."

He kisses him again. "See you later."

"Yes, you most definitely will."

Will forces himself to step back, still staring, and when he turns he almost thinks of canceling their plans to stay home. Every part of him wants to stay close to Hannibal.

Is this what it feels like to fall in love?

He frowns.

No, it couldn't be that. It's only been two weeks since they even met.

Way too soon.

Bev's face falls when he comes back into the living room. "Oh no, what's…"

"It's nothing," he blushes, "I just….I'm gonna miss him today."

She groans. "Oh god you're the cutest. Let's get out of here. My teeth hurt from you two."

Will blushes. "Shut up."

Bev bumps his shoulder with hers as they head for his car.

"I can see why you're sticking around. Look at you all in lo…"

"I'm not," he interrupts, frowning, "I just…I like him, that's all."

"Uh huh. Sure."

They pull away from the house and Will feels the distance with every part of him. It's weird to be this attached to anyone, he knows that, but still he takes one hand off the wheel to rub at his neck and feels slightly better.

"You are *so* in love."

He doesn't answer her, blushing harder, and when they get to the end of the road he turns.

"I gotta get gas."

“Uhhhh…no you don’t.”

Bev taps the gas gauge.

It’s completely full.

“Oh.”

“Ohhhh,” she says, “Yeah, he’s the best. Just the absolute best.”

Will smiles. “Yeah, he is.”

“Did you count how much money he gave you?”

“No, I…”

“Hand it over.”

“Bev, it’s not...I like him cuz he’s him and I don’t know if I really…”

She taps the glove compartment. “We’re gonna have a good day, Will, and we need that money to do it. Let me count.”

He pulls the cash out of his pocket and hands it to her, frowning as he drives.

A minute later he hears her gasp. “Holy shit.”

“What?”

“There’s four hundred dollars here,” she says, “He...casually gave you four hundred dollars like it was nothing.”

Will feels warm all over and blushes. “He’s just...I mean...he likes it when I’m happy so…”

“Does Hannibal have any siblings? Cousins? Cuz I am totally up for becoming some rich girl’s sugar baby.”

He frowns. “All of his family passed away.”

“Oh. Does he have rich friends with daughters?”

Will smiles. “I doubt it, I feel like the only people he knows are people in the neighborhood. He...doesn’t seem to have anyone else.”

“That’s sad and a little weird, isn’t it? A guy like that with no friends?”

He shakes his head. “Maybe he just has high standards.”

“And you fit them all?”

He blushes. “What’s so weird about that?”

“Nothing, I guess. It’s just...you’re sixteen and he’s what...thirty? Forty?”

“I don’t know,” Will mumbles, “I never really asked.”

“Shouldn’t you? I mean…”

“Just drop it ok, Bev!? God, why do you even care?”

“Calm down, Will. I wasn’t saying he’s evil or something.”

“It’s none of your business anyway.”

“I guess not.”

They’re quiet until they get near the shopping center, and Will feels kinda bad.

“Bev…”

“Maybe we should just end Will and Bev day,” she mumbles, staring out the window, “Since I can’t say anything right.”

“No, that’s...sorry I just...I like him a lot.”

She smiles. “Wow, I had no idea!”

He laughs. “Forgive me for being weird?”

“I love you being weird,” she says, hugging him from the side, “Just...don’t let all this stuff get to you so much, ok?”

“I won’t.”

“Me asking about Hannibal isn’t me being against him. He’s really nice, honestly, and...I like that you’re so happy.”

Will smiles. “Thank you.”

“The shelter is just up the road.”

Cozy Critters is written in big red letters as they drive up to it, and Will’s excited even before they leave the car. “I’ve never been in here since my folks won’t let me get anything bigger than a fish, but it’s the closest one and I know a few people who’ve gotten pets here.”

They walk inside and it’s blissfully empty though the place is as bland as can be. The walls are all cream colored, the chairs are dark brown, and there’s not a hint of happiness inside.

Will feels bad for the animals already.

They walk up to the counter and a man whose nametag reads RANDALL frowns at them.

“Hey, we’re here to see some dogs.” Bev says, “Any dogs you got.”

“You have to fill out paperwork,” Randall says, pushing the paper toward them, “If you’re looking to adopt.”

“We’re not quite ready for that yet but…”

“You still have to fill out paperwork,” Randall repeats, “We can’t just let people inside without knowing who they are.”

Bev rolls her eyes. “Fine.”

They sit down and both fill out paperwork for adoptions, though Will’s stomach hurts just thinking about getting another dog. He hasn’t had a dog in years, and the thought of losing one makes his anxiety spike.

No, this is just fine.

The two of them hand over their papers and Randall looks them over, glaring up every few minutes before he unlocks the small wooden gate. “You can go inside. There’s people who will help you if you want to see an animal in the quiet rooms.”

“Thanks!” Bev says, pulling Will through.

The sounds of dogs and cats are all around them as they wander down the one hall. Will’s chest aches as he sees so many dogs behind bars, and when he reaches out quite a few lick his fingers.

“Awww, he likes you!”

Will laughs. “All dogs like people.”

“Nuh uh,” Bev says, shaking her head, “My neighbor once had this AWFUL dog who would bark like mad at ANYONE who wasn’t him. Dogs like *some* people, not all of them.”

“True.”

They spend the next half hour just going through all the hallways, even stopping by the cats, and it’s at the very end where Will sees a dog with some spots and black over an almost amber color laying down sadly.

“Hey boy,” he says, bending down to put his fingers up.

The dog doesn’t move, and Will looks to see the name.

Winston.

He frowns. “Hey, Winston, what’s going on huh?”

“Poor thing,” Bev sighs, “It says they found him wandering around.”

“Yeah,” someone says, making Will’s skin crawl, “Poor guy was all alone and…”

Will backs away from the cage and Matt is standing there holding a broom.

“What are you doing here?”

“I volunteer twice a week,” he says, eyeing Will, “That’s how I got Seaweed. They were gonna put the little guy down so I took him home.”

“Will…”

“I think we’re gonna go.”

“Nah, c’mon. I can take him out and you can pet him if you want.”

Will is torn between wanting to touch the dog and being away from Matt.

“I…”

“I gotta stay with you though, that’s the rules. They don’t want the guests to be alone with the animals. You never know who could just come through here.”

Will shakes his head. “No, we’re...I think we’re gonna go. C’mon.”

He turns and is halfway down the hall when Matt calls out.

“Lookin’ good, Will! Lookin’ real good!”

Will is in tears when they leave the shelter, and Bev doesn’t even try to touch him when they get in the car.

“Will?”

“Why won’t he just...I don’t…”

She moves to touch him and he pulls his hand away, hissing. “Don’t!”

“Okay,” she says, “Do...I mean...we can go back to your place?”

Will wipes the tears from his face. “No, I don’t...he’s not gonna ruin this. He…”

“Then, let’s drive as far as we can to make sure he’s nowhere near us. Will and Bev day is not gonna be stopped!”

He smiles, laughing as he looks at her. “You’re the best.”

“I know,” she says, putting her hand over his, “Now...let’s go spend some money.”

Will pulls out of the shelter parking lot and feels much lighter.

Will and Bev day hasn’t even started yet and he knows it’s gonna be amazing.

Chapter 32

Will turns up the music as they drive away, and they both end up singing along to “I Want it That Way” but burst into giggles halfway through because Bev can’t help but tell a story about her Mom’s obsession with teaching her about the Backstreet Boys when she was in middle school.

“...and then she pulls out this old folder like it was some sacred document and shows me autographs! I had to keep their weird looking superhero action figures on my dresser till I was fourteen!”

He can’t breathe, he's laughing so hard when he sees The Galleria, an obvious mall, and he points.

“Are we….far...enough?”

Bev smacks the glove compartment. “Yes! Yes!”

It’s been at least an hour since they left the shelter, and he’s feeling a million times better when they park.

“I don’t even know why we’re here,” he laughs, “All this money…”

“We...are gonna have some fun. That’s why!”

Will smiles at her. “Okay.”

Bev grabs his hand as they get out of the car and they walk together into the blue doors. The very first store they see has horror stuff in the display window so Bev pulls him inside. He still feels weird about spending Hannibal’s money but sees a ‘Cannibal Doctor’ shirt that he immediately grabs.

“Ohhh I love this movie,” Bev says, “This will look good on you. You should try it on.”

“No, I…”

She grabs a few more things as she takes him across the store to the dressing room.

“Go! Go! I’ll stay out here.”

He sighs and drags himself into the dressing room pulling off his t-shirt.

Will frowns at the too tight shorts he has on.

Maybe he should get a bigger size while he can?

He pulls a little at his shorts and sighs. “Maybe I need to start running in the morning,” he mumbles, pulling on the shirt.

The shirt is way too tight when he gets it down and Will pats his belly.

“You’re really gonna make me get new clothes, huh?”

He sighs and walks out to Bev who smirks when she sees him. “Pick the wrong size?”

“No, I...I think I gained weight from all the food Hannibal keeps making.”

She grins. “You needed it though! You were too skinny.”

“No, I wasn’t,” he mumbles, blushing, “I...can you get me a bigger size shirt and...maybe some XL shorts?”

Bev salutes. “Aye, aye Captain!”

Will laughs. “You’re so weird.”

She grins and pats his belly. “Go take that off. I’ll bring it to you.”

He heads back into the dressing room and takes off the shirt staring at his bigger belly again. It’s weird how it just came on like this.

“I wasn’t skinny,” he mumbles, patting his belly, “I…”

A rumble under his hand makes him frown. “We just ate!” he laughs, “Not gonna happen.”

There’s a knock on the dressing room door and he opens it to Bev who hands him the shirt along with a bunch of other clothes he didn’t ask for. “Hey, I didn’t…”

“Your boyfriend gave you fun money, you’re gonna use it.”

She smiles. “And quit obsessing over gaining weight. You’re a growing boy! It’s not gonna kill you to put on a few more pounds,” she says, laughing as she goes to leave, “It’s not like you’re knocked up or something.”

Will laughs as he closes the door and then frowns as her words seem to echo back at him.

It’s not like you’re knocked up or something.

Maybe...

“No, that’s...no.”

He pushes the thought away immediately as he changes out of his shorts and pulls on the new ones. They fit like a glove, and the shirt does too. Will looks at himself in the mirror again and smiles, putting a hand on his belly.

“Better.”

Bev is waiting outside when he comes to show her, and she whistles. “Lookin’ good, Hot Stuff.”

He blushes. “Shut up.”

“The shorts fit better?”

“Much.”

“Get at least four pairs then, I mean why not right?”

He shrugs.

Why not?

Will heads back to the dressing room and changes out of everything but the shorts. The shirt he had on isn’t that tight and when they go up to the register he grabs Bev some things too despite her making noises of protest.

“It’s Will and Bev day,” he says, slapping everything onto the counter, “Deal with it.”

She grins. “Okay.”

That’s how the rest of the day goes.

Everytime one of them starts to protest they just say, “It’s Will and Bev day” before buying whatever they want.

The next two hours pass by so fast that Will barely notices his stomach ache until they’re walking the Eatery. He winces, patting his belly.

“You okay?”

“I think I’m just hungry.”

“Let’s get some pizza.”

“Yeah,” he says, smiling, “Okay.”

They’re halfway down to Slice of Life when he smells something amazing. Will turns and grabs the hand of someone leaving The Sandwich Shoppe. “What is this?”

The woman stares at him oddly. “Um...a fish deluxe?”

He lets her go. “I’m getting one.”

“Are you ok?”

“Yeah, I’m fine, I’m just...I need one.”

“Oh...kay?”

Will pulls out a twenty and hands it to Bev. “You can get pizza I’ll...be here.”

“You sure you’re ok?”

“Uh huh.”

Bev leaves and he stands in line, tapping his foot as he waits and rubbing his belly. The lingering smell is still with him, and when he gets up to the counter he leans in to sniff.

“Can I...help you?”

“I need a fish deluxe,” he says, “Two of them.”

“Is that all?”

“And fries,” he says, suddenly starving, “Big fries and a mango lemonade.”

“That’ll be…”

Will hands over a twenty, shaking as he stares down through the clear window displaying the different sandwich parts. He barely grabs his change as he then moves over to watch them make his food, impatient and hungry.

“Mmm…”

His teeth feel heavy in his mouth as he sees them put one of the sandwiches together, and the second comes right after.

The scent wafts over to him and he licks his lips. “Mmm…”

“Will, I got---”

He slaps his hand down on the counter when they take too long to pull his fries from the oil.

“The fries are done!” he yells, making both the people working stare at him oddly.

A minute later they hand him his tray and Will glares, grabbing some ketchup before biting into the sandwich without even looking at Bev.

“Mmmm…”

“Hey, are you ok?”

Will feels his vision turn red as they sit down and he closes his eyes, trying to calm himself.

What’s wrong with him?

“I’m fine,” he lies, not opening his eyes, “Just...hungry.”

“Yeah I can see that.”

He squeezes his eyes shut hard. *Not now.*

Will opens his eyes and he's seeing normally again. He lets out a breath and finishes his sandwich fast.

"Will?"

He frowns at her. "What?"

"You sure you're ok?"

"I'm just hungry, that's all."

Bev nods. "Yeah, you said that already."

"Bev, just drop it. Okay?"

"Okay."

He finishes all his food abnormally fast, concentrating on keeping his shift the whole time, and when he's done Bev is still only halfway done with her slice of pepperoni.

Will pats his belly, feeling much better, and frowns.

"Sorry."

"You don't have to apologize," she says, smiling, "I get grumpy when I'm hungry too, though I've never been hungry enough to eat that much food in five minutes."

Will suddenly feels like he might cry and wipes his face. "I just…"

"Will?"

"I've been...I dunno."

"Maybe it's an anxiety thing," she says, as he sniffles, "I mean all that stuff with your Mom and then You-Know-Who...you might just…"

"Wanted to eat my problems?" he says, frowning.

"Maybe? I mean, I dunno. I just...oh."

Bev's whole face falls as she stares at something behind him. "What is it?"

She looks down at her food. "Abby is here with her Dad."

Will turns to see Abigail walking with an older man. She's carrying some bags and even from here he can see she's miserable. "What are they doing all the way out here?"

"I don't know, but...I'm not hungry anymore. Can we go?"

"Yeah, sure," he says, grabbing their trays.

They toss out whatever's left on the trays and head away from the Eatery. Will hates how sad Bev suddenly is as they go, and he takes her hand. "C'mon, let's go find something fun."

She smiles. "Okay."

There's a story a lot like the last one that's not far off, and he pulls her inside heading right for the DVDs.

"You're not seriously gonna buy a forty dollar DVD," she laughs.

"No, but it's fun to look."

"Okay, but I'm judging you if you even think of buying any of these when your boyfriend paid for you to stream anything you want because you're spoiled."

He blushes. "Shut up."

"Nope."

They laugh at some of the sillier horror dvd covers for the next few minutes until Bev's eyes widen and she drags him across the store to a wall of figurines. "Oh my god they have 'The Slasher'! I've been dying to find this!"

Will grabs the figure off the wall. "Well, happy birthday."

"You don't even know when my birthday is!" she laughs, "And it's a hundred dollars! Will…"

He shakes his head. "It's Will and Bev day."

Bev wraps her arms around his neck and kisses him on the cheek. "I love you, Graham."

"I love you too, but stop before someone thinks we're dating."

"Nope," she laughs, keeping her arm around him, "Not gonna happen."

He shakes his head as they walk through the store and stops when he sees something.

It's a tie.

"What?"

Will walks over and picks the tie up, grinning at the "Rental Rampage" movie poster printed on it.

"This was the first movie I watched with Hannibal."

She grabs the tie.

"Hey!"

“Will and Bev day,” she says, “Also...it’ll be super cute for you to give this to him and I want to see him wear it.”

Will blushes.

“He won’t.”

“Uh huh.”

They go up to the counter and drop more than they should but leave grinning.

“We’re running out of money so we better go before we see another ugly tie,” Bev teases, turning them back around.

“We…”

Will frowns when he spots two familiar faces.

Abigail looks just as miserable as she did when they last saw her, and her Dad’s stern glare makes Will’s hackles rise.

“Will?”

Bev gasps. “Will, let’s…”

Abigail’s eyes widen when she sees them. “D--”

“Hey Abby,” Will says, as an odd scent makes his whole body shudder, “Didn’t think we’d see you here.”

“Honey, are these your friends?”

“Y...yeah,” She says, her voice shaking,” Dad, this is…”

“Will,” he says, holding out his hand, “And Bev.”

Garrett shakes Will’s hand and he immediately realizes what the scent is he’s smelling.

Blood.

Will struggles to keep shift as he lets go. “Well,” Garrett says, his smile strained, “It was nice to meet Abigail’s friends. Have a good day.”

The minute they’re gone Will knows he needs to get to the nearest bathroom, somewhere away from Bev.

“I...I have to go to the bathroom. I…”

“Will…”

He sees a hallway leading to one and runs, his vision a red haze. There's thankfully no one in the hall coming out of either bathroom and he rushes into the men's room closing the stall down behind him.

"No, no, no," he hisses, staring at his sudden webbed hands.

This isn't supposed to happen.

Not like this.

Why did Abby's dad smell so much like blood?

Will presses his hands to his eyes, taking a few deep breaths, and his body still seems determined to change.

"Will?"

Bev.

"This...this is the men's bathroom," he mumbles, his teeth making it hard to talk, "Get out, Bev."

"No," she says, "Not until you tell me you're ok. Open the door."

Will feels tears fill his eyes. "I...can't."

"Will, open the door!"

He slams his clawed hand across the door hard, making it rattle. "I CAN'T!"

Bev is quiet on the other side.

"If you don't open the door right now I'm gonna get a security guard, and tell someone to call the ambulance because you're freaking me out."

Will lets out a long breath, and feels his hands shift back. His vision is still red when he opens the door.

Bev stares at him with wide eyes.

"Will…"

"I...I"m fine."

"Your eyes."

"Bev...please."

She reaches out to touch his face. "You're fine?"

Will nods.

“Are you gonna tell me why your eyes are completely red?”

He feels tears fall down his face. “I...I can’t.”

“Will,” she says, suddenly in tears, “You can tell me anything.”

“Not here,” he says, “Not…”

Bev nods. “Okay. But...can you make it go away?”

He closes his eyes again and breathes out slowly.

“Everything is okay, Will,” she says, her voice shaking, “I’m not...you’re freaking me out but I’m not...I’m still here.”

Will opens his eyes and she smiles. “There’s those pretty blues.”

He rushes forward and hugs her tight, letting out a sob. “Bev…”

“No crying,” she says, crying, “It’s Will and Bev day.”

Will buries his face against her neck. “Will and Bev day.”

“And...I’ve seen scarier horror monsters. You don’t scare me.”

He shakes his head. “You don’t…”

“C’mon,” she says, grabbing his hand and stepping back, “I think we have a lot to talk about on the ride home.”

Will nods and takes her hand before grabbing a few of their bags.

The two of them leave the men’s room and head back the way they came, not saying anything.

They’ll save it for the ride home.

Chapter 33

Will's a bundle of nerves as they drive away from the mall and struggles to keep himself together.

What was he supposed to say?

He takes several deep breaths that don't really help, and is grateful when Bev breaks the silence.

"Are you a mermaid? Or I guess merman? Cuz you're *super* into the water and…"

Will can't help but start laughing, loud long laughs that make his chest hurt, and soon he's in tears. "N..n…no," he says, shaking his head, "I…"

"Will, we shouldn't do this driving. Pull over into that bank parking lot."

"But…"

"Pull over!"

He turns into the bank lot and parks, leaving the car running as he tries to calm down.

"I'm sorry but...if we talk about this it shouldn't be while you're driving."

Will looks out the window and nods. "Yeah."

They're quiet again, probably too quiet, and when Bev repeats her question he doesn't laugh this time.

"Are you a merman?"

"No," he whispers, shaking his head, "No, that's...no. I…," he looks at her, "I'm *super* into the water?"

"You're always going out on boat rides with Hannibal, or hanging out with your swimmer boyfriend. So yeah. I think that's *super* into water!"

Will's hands shake as he grabs hold of the steering wheel. "I...it has to do with water."

"But no merman?"

"No."

"Damn."

He smiles, sniffling. "You're taking this really well."

“Oh don’t think I’m not freaking out,” Bev says, shaking her head, “This...this is the weirdest thing that’s ever happened to me and I don’t even know what it is yet.”

Will frowns. “Oh.”

“Hey,” she says, grabbing his arm, “I’m not...I mean...talk to me.”

“My eyes sometimes turn red.”

“Yeah, I caught that.”

“And...I...I can swim really fast and...my toes and fingers...they’re webbed. I think I can breathe underwater.”

“Will…”

“And...my boyfriend...the swimmer…I…Bev...I’m..a monster.”

Will’s vision turns red as he lifts his head and she touches his cheek with tears in her eyes.

“You’re not a monster, Will, you’re…”

“No, I...I am,” he whispers, “I...he...it’s...he’s like me. All of it, and…”

Bevs eyes widen. “He’s like you?”

Will nods. “And there’s a third one.”

“What the fuck?” she whispers, “Will…”

He shakes his head. “I don’t know what to do,” he hisses, pulling away from her, “I...I’m…”

“Shit, Will, you...you can’t...shit.”

“I can show you,” he sniffles, wiping his face as he nods, “I can, I…”

Bev grabs his hand before he can start the car again. “Hey, hey,” she says, wiping her face, “Just...let’s sit on this, yeah? You…” she laughs as tears fall down her cheeks, “...are a creature from the black lagoon.”

Will laughs and falls against her shoulder. “Bev…”

“And...you have a guy creature who’s into you and...a third one who…”

“The water snake,” Will whispers, “At your house.”

Bev curses. “Fuck, that was him?”

He nods. “He wants me, and I don’t want him. I...I…”

“So you have two monsters who want you, but one is good and one is bad.”

“Yes.”

“And...your Mom…”

Will lifts his head. “She told me my Dad isn’t my Dad, and...I think...something bad happened to her. She can’t remember anything, but…”

“Jesus, Will,” she sighs, “All this and you’ve only been in town two weeks.”

He laughs and starts to cry again. “Yeah, I...lucky me.”

“You didn’t tell Hannibal?”

Will shakes his head. “No, no, I...I can’t.”

“What? Why?”

“He…”

“He’d burn down the world for you, Will,” she says, “I’ve seen the way you two are together. I don’t think…”

He pulls back, wiping his cheeks. “I...I can’t.”

“So you’re just gonna hide this from him the rest of your life?”

Will closes his eyes tight and forces a shift on his arm holding it up for her.

Bev rears back, her eyes wide, and doesn’t speak.

“I’m just supposed to show him this is how I look and ask for a hug? I...no,” he moves away, forcing the shift back even though it hurts, “No.”

Bev doesn’t say anything for a long time, and Will doesn’t either. There’s cars driving down the road in front of them, all full of people with normal lives, and he wonders if they know just how easy they’ve got it.

“Does it hurt?”

Will sniffles. “Sometimes.”

“Will,” she says, “You know I love you, right?”

He looks over at her. “Still?”

Bev smiles, nodding. “Yeah, *still*. I love you, and yeah this is...*a lot*, but...I’m not running to turn you into the Army or anything. Not now, not ever.”

Will’s belly hurts as he throws himself into her arms, and she hugs him tight.

“Bev,” he sobs, “Bev...please don’t...I…”

“Hey, hey...I’m here, ok? I’m...you don’t...have to do this alone anymore.”

He buries his face into her neck as he sobs, the relief making him light headed, and they just sit there as he lets go of it all. Will doesn’t know how long he’s crying but when he finally stops he’s worn out.

“Can you drive?”

Will sniffles. “Yeah, I...I think so.”

“You think so or you know so?” Bev teases, “Cuz you’re a sea monster and you just lost a *lot* of water.”

He laughs. “I know so,” he says, restarting the car, “I...I can drive.”

“Okay,” she says, sighing as he lays back, “But...we’re still not done.”

Will frowns as he pulls them out of the bank parking lot. “You said…”

“I said you couldn’t talk serious shit like that when you were driving but we’re beyond that now. Now...I want to know about you and your ‘swimmer’ boyfriend.”

He blushes as he turns them onto the road again.

“There’s...I mean...I don’t know what you why.”

“Uh, cuz you’ve been foolin’ around with a sea monster all summer while also banging the older doctor all the Moms in town want to be with?”

Will frowns. “We’re not...I...I’m not gonna anymore,” he says, his chest hurting even as the words come out, “Not with him. I can’t do that to Hannibal.”

“Are you sure about that?”

He nods. “Yeah, I...I’m sure.”

“Okay,” she says, “So...if we’re not gonna talk about him...tell me about you.”

“I told you already.”

“You have webbed hands,” she says, “And toes, and...can swim really fast.”

“And breathe underwater.”

“Do you...have a tail?”

Will blushes. “Y...yeah.”

“And…”

“A fin,” he says, his voice shaking, “On my back. He...he has it too. They both do, but the other...he’s green.”

“And you just...you’ve been dealing with all of this on your own.”

“What else was I supposed to do?”

She sighs. “I really do think Hannibal would be ok with this,” she says, “And he’s a doctor so maybe---”

“NO!” he growls, his eyes turning, “No! I’m...no.”

“Okay, okay,” she whispers, “Sorry I said anything.”

“I’m sorry, but...no.”

“Okay, okay.”

Will feels his belly rumble and winces, rubbing. “Shit.”

“You ok?”

“I…” he suddenly feels his stomach clench, “I...I think I’m gonna be sick.”

“What? Will---”

He crosses across all three lanes and pulls into the closest lot rushing out of the car to throw up all over the grass. His fish sandwiches, fries, and everything else all spew out as Bev holds his hair back. “Let it all out.”

“Ugh…” he groans, shivering, “That…”

“That was gross,” she says, “But...you didn’t do it in the car and I thank you.”

Will laughs and his stomach hurts. “Don’t make me laugh.”

“Sorry, I was just trying to lighten the mood. You done?”

He nods and they walk back over to the car.

“That...was awful.”

“It looked pretty bad.”

“And now I’m hungry again.”

“That’s...probably not a good idea.”

Will frowns, patting his belly. “You really had to do that to me, huh?” he asks, rubbing his hand over.

“Are you talking to your belly?”

“I’m trying to reason with it.”

Bev laughs. “Will…”

“I just...I need a second.”

“Okay,” she says, rubbing his back, “But...can I ask you something?”

He lays his head down on the steering wheel. “Maybe.”

“It...might be crazy to ask this but I have to,” she whispers, “Do you remember earlier we were joking about your stomach being too big and I said ‘it’s not like you’re knocked up or something?’ Remember that?”

Will frowns. “Yeah.”

“Are you...sure you’re *not?*”

He turns to look at her. “What?”

“I mean, there are some species of male amphibians that can carry eggs! You...maybe…”

Will puts a hand over his belly. “Bev…”

“I’m not saying this to freak you out, or even to upset you. Cuz I know you’re in love with Hannibal…”

“I’m not!” he says, his voice shaking, “I...I’ve only known him for two weeks and... Christ, Bev, I’m not pregnant!”

“You said you were gaining weight super fast, and you went feral over fish sandwiches earlier while then spewing all of it up in the grass. Will…”

He tightens the arm he has across his belly. “No,” he whispers, “No, it’s…no.”

Bev puts up her hands. “Okay, but...if you were...I’d still help you raise all your tadpoles or whatever.”

Will lets out a laugh. “Bev…”

“And I think Hannibal would too,” she says again, “I think...I just think he’d be okay with anything if it was you.”

He closes his eyes.

“I’m *not*.”

She pats his head. “Okay, Graham,” she whispers, “Okay.”

The drive home is in complete silence.

Will's thoughts are mangled up with his feelings and he struggles to keep himself together for the next hour as they get closer. He's felt so lonely the past few weeks since this all began and now here he is pushing away the one person who finally knows.

"Bev," he says, as they pass by the shopping center, "Do you wanna get a sundae?"

She grabs his hand and squeezes. "Yeah, I do."

They get two sundaes at Fuller's, Will's strawberry peanut butter and hers just vanilla chocolate. Will leans against her as they eat in the parking lot, and Bev puts her hand on his belly. He doesn't make her move it.

"So many tadpoles," she jokes, "All swimmin' around in there."

Will laughs. "Shut up."

She grins. "Okay, but...what would you do?"

"If I was carrying tadpoles?"

"Or baby creatures from the black lagoon."

Will laughs. "I guess I'd...probably freak out?"

Bev pats his belly. "It's a good thing you're not then," she says, her face showing doubt, "Right?"

"Yeah," he says, "Right."

He puts his hand over hers on his belly, and she smiles. "Will and Bev day was pretty great, right?"

Will entwines their fingers. "Yeah."

They turn the radio on again as they drive back to the house, and both are singing Miley Cyrus obnoxiously loud as they park outside Bev's house. The two of them collapse into giggles after the song ends, turn off the radio, and when they hug suddenly Will starts crying again.

"Bev…"

She kisses his cheek. "I'm here, Will. Okay?"

"Okay," he whispers, his voice breaking, "I...I can show…"

Bev lifts her head up and smiles. "I think...maybe...give me a little time before the full reveal," she says, then grabs his hand when Will's face falls, "No, no, don't do that! I'm not running, Will. Okay? It's just...*a lot*."

Will nods. “Okay,” he says, sniffling as he nods, “Okay.”

She hugs him again tight. “Take good care of the tadpoles, ok?”

He laughs. “Bev…”

Bev grins as she gets out of the car, grabs her bags, and leans down one more time to point at him.

“And you’re gonna be pissed at me but...I really think you should tell him.”

Will shook his head. “Bev…”

“That’s all I’m gonna say,” she sighs, “Goodnight, Will.”

He smiles. “Goodnight.”

The minute the door closes Will lets out a long breath before pulling away from the curb. He starts to hum that song that he and Hannibal hummed together, and by the time he pulls up to the house he feels lighter than he has in weeks.

He gets out of the car, grabs his bags, and heads into the house.

The smell of fish makes his mouth water but he goes down the hall first to drop off his stuff. He finds Hannibal’s tie and heads for the kitchen smiling.

Hannibal is working at the stove when he opens the door and the smile he gives Will makes everything even better. “Hello, Will.”

Will smiles. “Hi.”

He watches Hannibal’s smile fade. “You...have you been crying?”

“No, I…”

Hannibal sets the spoon on the counter he’d been stirring and comes up to touch Will’s face.

“You have.”

“It’s...it’s nothing,” he lies, “I’m fine.”

“Did you and Beverly get into an argument?”

“No, it’s...it was just something stupid, that’s all. I’m fine.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “You’re certain?”

“Yeah,” he whispers, “Nothing’s wrong.”

He stares at Will for a moment before his smile softens. “Alright,” he says, “What is that you’re holding?”

Will blushes. “It’s...Bev made me get it,” he mumbles, “You don’t have to wear it if you don’t---”

Hannibal takes the tie from him and holds it up. “Rental Rampage,” he says, and turns to Will, “Is that not the movie we watched together? About the renter who murders his clients?”

He feels warm all over that Hannibal even remembers. “Yeah,” he says, “Bev thought...we needed to get you something.”

Hannibal takes off his apron and sets it on the counter before undoing the tie he’s wearing. Will’s chest aches as he watches him gently lay his probably super expensive tie on the counter and put the cheap horror movie tie over his head.

“You don’t have---”

“The coloring works quite well against this suit,” he says, tying the tie, “And…” he smiles, “You bought me a gift so of course I want to wear it.”

Will grins, stepping closer, and holds the tie in his hands. “It looks amazing on you,” he whispers, “Just like I thought it would.”

Hannibal kisses him again. “Thank you, Will.”

“You’re welcome.”

He lays his head on Hannibal’s shoulder after he puts the apron on again, and watches him marinate some tilapia for dinner. The process is slow and boring but Will feels calm just to be close to Hannibal and he lies to watch.

The fish is paired with some roasted potatoes and carrots, which to Will’s delight do not make him sick.

Leanne does not come to dinner.

“She’s resting.”

“Good,” Will mumbles, grabbing Hannibal’s hand across the table, “I don’t want her here anyway.”

Hannibal frowns. “I know I have apologized before but I wish to extend my apologies once again for...all of this.”

“No, it’s…”

He squeezes Will’s hand. “I brought you here, and while I am overjoyed at our connection you have gone through pain that you would not have otherwise.”

Will blinks back tears. “Hannibal, it’s---”

“It’s not fine,” Hannibal sighs, “But...I will spend every waking moment I have trying to make up for exposing you to your mother’s toxic influence.”

“I know.”

Dessert is strawberry cream pie that starts out being eaten separately but by the time their plates are empty they’re sharing. Will sits in Hannibal’s lap as Hannibal feeds him, and he does the same smiling so wide his face hurts.

“Will…”

“This is a *much* better way to eat in this room.”

Hannibal smiles. “Yes, it is.”

He sets his empty plate down on the table and moves to straddle Hannibal’s lap, wrapping arms around his neck. “I hate to say it but...I’m still a little hungry.”

“Oh?”

“Mmm hmm,” he sighs, “I’m hungry and...I think you are too.”

Hannibal lifts him up onto the table. “What are you hungry for?”

“You,” Will whispers, “I’m...I want you.”

He moves to undo his tie and Will grabs his hand. “No,” he says, blushing, “Leave the suit on.”

Hannibal smiles. “As you wish.”

Will’s happy to be free of his tight shorts then, and lowers himself onto Hannibal’s cock with a groan. Hannibal kisses him softly, tenderly, and soon he’s filled with more than just desire. He’s lost in the pleasure, desperate for every touch, and when he comes he bites Hannibal’s tongue hard. The blood fills his mouth and he sees red, closing his eyes tight as the tremors slow. Hannibal fucks up into him even faster now, growling, and when he feels him come Will has tears falling down his face.

Mine.

Hannibal slows his thrusts, arms tightening around Will, and when Will opens his eyes again his vision is clear. “That...was a good dinner,” Will teases.

“Yes,” Hannibal whispers, “It was.”

Will grabs the tie and smiles. “And this is a great tie.”

Hannibal smiles. “Yes, it really is.”

They shower after and Will struggles to keep shift but he holds on tight because he has no other choice.

Hannibal can’t know his secret and probably never will.

That’s just the way things have to be.

He doesn’t expect Hannibal to follow to his room after their shower but he does, and they lock the door behind them before crawling into Will’s bed.

Hannibal turns on streaming and finds Rental Rampage.

“I do believe it’s time for me to see this from the beginning.”

Will smiles and lays his head on Hannibal’s chest. “I think so too.”

He falls asleep before the first person is even killed on screen but it doesn’t matter.

Will and Bev day really was amazing.

Chapter 34

They wake up in stages the next morning.

First Will rocks back against Hannibal, whose sigh makes every part of him warm.

Next, he moves Hannibal's hand off his belly to the front of his briefs and begins to rock forward with a moan.

Then, Hannibal begins to thrust against him and he whimpers.

"Will…"

"Please," he sighs, "I...god, please."

Hannibal wastes no time and thrusts right into Will after peeling down his briefs. He covers Will's mouth with his own to muffle any sounds he wants to make, and begins to fuck him slowly.

Will feels desperate for every thrust, and arches back chasing his orgasm. Hannibal begins to stroke his cock every time he moves into him deeper, and Will can't help the quick orgasm that comes. He bites Hannibal's tongue as he moves faster, while every thrust his cock seems bigger than the last. His groan as he spills into Will is everything, even muffled, and when they pull apart both are smiling.

"Good morning."

He grins. "Good morning."

"You're feeling rather….amorous, this morning."

Will kisses him again. "Is that bad? Do you think she heard us?"

Hannibal touches his cheek. "Never bad, but...reckless. I don't think she heard or there would be a knock at the door."

He smiles. "Good."

"I regret that I have to move."

Will lays back against him. "Then don't move."

"I'm still inside you."

"So?"

"Will…"

He sighs sadly when Hannibal pulls out, and lays on his back with a frown. “Stay.”

“I need to make breakfast,” Hannibal says, standing, “And you...need to shower.”

“Maybe I don’t want to shower.”

Hannibal smiles as he puts on his clothes. “Then shower anyway, it’s good for you.”

Will laughs. “Good for me?”

“Yes,” he says, coming over to kiss Will again, “Good for you. Shower, dress, and meet me at the table in twenty minutes.”

He sighs. “Fine.”

Hannibal pats his cheek. “Thank you. If you shower, perhaps...you may see me wearing a special gift.”

Will blushes. “Yeah?”

“Yes, but...that is only if you shower.”

“Fine.”

“Good boy.”

His blush deepens and he can’t find anything else to say that isn’t stupid so he just nods.

Will hates to watch him go but he knows they can’t live in their own happy bubble for long. He grabs his phone and goes right from bed to the bathroom. The water is still cold, which he usually is okay with, but Will sits on the toilet to wait for it to warm up.

You up?

Always. How are the tadpoles?

He laughs.

Still not existent.

If you say so, but...I think A LOT of things that live in the water….

I may be a sea monster but that doesn’t make me pregnant.

So you say.

Will rolls his eyes and sets his phone down on the sink before getting into the shower. He feels better under the water, like he always does, and soon he lets loose on his shift. The quick change was getting easier, especially underwater, and as he let his head fall back the water slid down his body.

Every drop feels almost like food.

He turns a few times, his tail knocking over shampoo bottles, and laughs putting his webbed hands on the tile.

Maybe the shower *was* good for him.

Not that Hannibal has any idea the reason why.

He sighs, his good mood suddenly dropping, and starts to wash his hair. The scent of the shampoo reminds him of Hannibal, and he soon is warm all over again.

Maybe if he got done fast enough they could have some fun at the table.

Will rushes through the rest, and runs to his bedroom to change, ignoring the messages he knows are Bev teasing more. He makes it to the dining room in record time and realizes that he probably is here too soon.

He pulls out his phone again.

Will.

Will.

C'mon don't ignore me.

I love you, you cute little sea monster. Please don't be mad?

I'm not mad.

I was in the shower.

You seem mad.

I'm not.

Will I know you're mad.

I'm not, I'm just tired.

Sleep bad?

No, I actually slept really well.

Alone?

Will smiles. **No.**

Oh, so maybe that's why you're so tired huh?

Shut up.

=)

Will goes to send a retort when the dining room door opens and Hannibal carries two covered dishes to the table. He's dressed in a tan suit, white shirt, and red tie.

Not the tie Will gave him.

He frowns. "I took a shower."

Hannibal doesn't even look at Will when he sits down. "I can see that."

"You said you'd wear the tie."

"I didn't think it went with this suit."

Will feels a bit better after he says that but it's obvious Hannibal is mad at him.

"Did I do something wrong?"

Hannibal's skin seems a bit bluer than normal, and when he finally does look at Will his eyes look red. "No, I suppose not."

Will frowns. "It seems like you're mad at me."

He gives Will an obvious fake smile. "I'm not, Will. Don't worry. Eat up."

Will's stomach growls when he sees the eggs and bacon. "Mmm…"

He piles on some scrambled eggs and bacon, taking a few bacon pieces along the way, and digs right in despite feeling like shit at how Hannibal is acting. Hannibal won't look at him again, and Will's chest hurts.

What happened in the last twenty minutes that would make him mad like this?

Breakfast is a disaster.

They barely talk and when Will offers to help with dishes Hannibal tells him no but he goes anyway.

The two of them rinse off their plates side by side.

"If I did something…"

"It's nothing," Hannibal insists," It's...my own mistake."

That makes Will feel even worse.

What did that mean?

Will is in tears by the time he's done and goes to leave but sees a fallen piece of bacon on the floor. He goes toward the garbage can and when he opens the top he's frozen when he sees

what's inside.

It's the tie.

He lifts the tie up and tosses the bacon before turning to Hannibal who seems to be waiting.

"What's this?"

"I didn't think it fit in with what was in my closet."

Will feels a tear fall down his cheek. "So you just...*threw it away?* You could've just given it back to me or…"

"Will…"

He tosses the tie to the floor as more tears fall. "FUCK YOU, YOU PRETENTIOUS ASSHOLE!"

Will runs out of the kitchen barely able to see through his tears and goes right to his room locking the door. He falls on the bed, sobbing, and feels like such an idiot.

Why is this hurting him so much?

His phone vibrates.

I love you, don't be mad.

I love you too. I'm not mad. But I think the tadpoles might be.

Lol.

He sets the phone down again and just lays on his bed, wiping off tears.

Yesterday had been so good and now it seemed like everything was going to shit.

Will doesn't turn on the TV, or even move at all for what feels like hours when there's a knock at his door. He doesn't move or even say a word.

"Will? It's Mommy."

His lip curls.

Why the hell would he want to talk to her?

"Hannibal told me you got into a fight, honey, and I just wanted to make sure you were ok."

Will puts a hand on his belly and doesn't answer her.

He turns away from the door and looks outside. The sun is shining and he suddenly wants to go outside into the lake very badly. Will closes his eyes and his stomach rumbles.

There's food waiting but he doesn't want it.

Not from *him.*

Will pats his stomach. " We'll find something, don't worry."

His phone vibrates again and Will pulls it out.

Did Hannibal like his tie?

Will's tears start to fall again. He finds grabs his keys before he gets up and goes to the window, pulls up the screen, and climbs out.

He goes right for his car and starts it, pulling away before he can even look back. There's still some gas left, though he wishes he'd grabbed the last of the money Hannibal gave him yesterday.

His phone vibrates in his pocket.

Check the glove compartment.

Hannibal.

Will wants to ignore it but can't help but open the glove compartment.

There's a stack of cash inside.

He closes it hard and sniffles as the tears can't seem to stop falling.

Will pulls over and texts Bev.

Can I come over?

Sure! You ok?

Not really.

You hungry? Mom made pancakes.

Starving.

I'll meet you at the door.

Will wipes the tears from his face as he drives, and when he pulls up to the house he practically runs out to Bev. She hugs him tight. "Will, what's wrong?"

He shakes his head.

"Will, you're scaring me."

Will lifts his head up. "He threw the tie away."

Bev's eyes widen. "What?"

"He told me he was gonna wear it and then...I found it in the trash and..it's stupid to be this upset."

"Asshole," Bev whispers, wiping his face, "Want me to bring your pancakes out here so my parents don't see?"

Will nods and sits on one of the outside chairs on the porch. "Thank you."

She leaves him to go inside and Will looks down, hating himself for being such a baby.

It was a tie.

Was it really that big of a deal?

Bev comes back fast with more pancakes than anyone needs but Will begins to devour them immediately. She sits down next to him, setting down their drinks, and starts on her own.

They don't talk until Will's cleared his plate and downed the whole glass of juice.

Bev sets down her plate and frowns at him.

"You ok?"

"I'm better," he mumbles, rubbing his belly, "I just...maybe I overreacted."

"Bullshit," she says, "What did he do when you gave him the tie?"

Will frowns. "He was happy last night and even this morning. It was like a switch flipped or something I don't know. He...it didn't feel like him."

Bev grabs his hand. "It was still a shitty thing to do, no matter the reason."

"He put cash in my car," he says, "Like that was gonna fix something. Like I even care about that."

"How much cash?" Bev asks, making him laugh.

"We're not going out again," he says, sighing, "I...I don't want his money."

She frowns. "Is there anything I can do?"

Will shakes his head. "You're doing it," he says, "I just...I couldn't be there. Leanne was even trying to bug me."

Bev's gaze darkens. "What did she want?"

"To gloat that her boyfriend is an asshole? I don't know."

"Will…"

He squeezes her hand. “I was thinking, I know you said you needed time but do you want to go swimming today?”

Bev’s eyes widen again. “With you?”

Will smiles. “No, with the Slasher. Yes, with me.”

She lets out a breath. “You...wanna show me?”

“If you’re ok with it. I didn’t bring my suit though, and the last time…”

“We can go somewhere else,” she says, “Far enough away from your stalker and your other boyfriend.”

Will smiles. “Yeah, if you want. I just...I need to swim.”

She nods. “Yeah, I...I’ll get my suit. And if you want, maybe my Dad has something you can wear or...we can go shopping?”

He blushes. “I’m not really gonna need much.”

Bev laughs and gets up, grabbing their plates. “I’ll go ask.”

Will lays back in the chair when she leaves and feels his phone vibrate again.

Be safe.

He hates the tears that fill his eyes.

Fuck you, he wants to type

But instead he ignores Hannibal again.

Bev comes out fast wearing her one piece and carrying a bag. “I got a change of clothes, and some trunks for you. We can go for a drive and find somewhere good?”

Will hugs her tight. “I’ll go change.”

“Nah, you can do it later. Let’s go before they come out and pester you.”

He laughs. “Ok.”

They pull away from the curb minutes later and Bev stares out the window as they drive.

“Are you sure about this?”

“Yeah,” she says, “I gotta see you sometime, right?”

He frowns. “You don’t have to right now, I just....”

Bev looks at him and smiles. “I want to, Will. Okay? I...I really want to. Though we might need some more gas if we’re gonna find somewhere secluded.”

Will sighs. “Open the glove compartment.”

She whistles when she sees the money. “Wow, he...really was sorry.”

“I still don’t care.”

“I know, but...wow.”

They stop at the nearest gas station once they get on the road, and Will fills all the way up. Bev grabs some snacks and they start their long drive.

He doesn’t feel nervous, which is weird, and the closer they are to the water the better he feels.

It’s almost two hours later when Bev shouts out.

“There! Down there!”

“You sure there’s not people?”

“We can park and walk! C’mon.”

Will parks by a small clearing that lies on the edge of the lake and is far enough away but still close to the forest preserve they passed minutes before. There is no one there, not that he can see or hear, and Bev hands him some swim trunks before he turns away to let her take off her shorts.

He takes off his shirt and everything else, slipping on the trunks that are a little big on him but he cinches them tight. “You decent?” Bev teases.

“Yeah.”

She looks a little pale but is still smiling. “Last one in is possibly carrying a bunch of sea monster babies!”

Will laughs as she rushes into the water, cursing at the cold, and he runs right in after jumping until he’s underwater. The feel of the lake makes him feel loads better, way better than the shower did, and he feels his shift come immediately.

He pokes his head out and sees Bev gasp through a red tint.

“Will?”

“What...what do I look like?”

“Your eyes,” she says, “And your face it’s...it always comes on this fast?”

“When I want it to,” he whispers, his teeth heavy in his mouth.

“Oh god,” she says, clutching her chest, “Your *teeth*.”

Will frowns and backs away. “I’m scaring you.”

“No!” she protests, “I...okay maybe a little.”

He shakes his head. “This was a bad idea.”

Bev rushes forward and pulls him into a hug. He can feel her heart beating a mile a minute against his chest and wraps his webbed hands around her. “Bev…”

“You’re my best friend,” she whispers, “I...I didn’t even have any real friends before you. I...yeah this is freaky but...I know you’re not gonna eat me.”

Will feels the fin at his back change and holds her tighter. “I l...ve you.”

“I love you too, Graham,” she says, sniffling as she pulls back, “Now...show me what you can do.”

Before Will can even blink she’s under the water and he dives down underwater rushing toward her. He catches her fast and they resurface, laughing as they resurface.

“Oh god you really are a merman!”

He grins. “You wanna see my tail?”

She pulls back and gestures toward him. “Show me what you got.”

He dives down under and flashes his tail up above the water before rolling back up again.

Bev looks speechless when he resurfaces. “Bev?”

“I...honestly until now I really don’t think I let it sink in. This is really you.”

Will frowns. “Yeah.”

Bev shakes her head. “I...it’s weird but...it’s wonderful.”

He comes closer and she puts a hand on his cheek. “You’re really ok?”

“Yeah,” she says, “I...I guess having a girlfriend and losing her isn’t the biggest thing to happen to me this summer.”

Will frowns. “Bev…”

He hears the sound of footsteps and dives down underwater to try to lose his shift as he hears Bev’s muffled voice. Will comes up fast and to his surprise realizes he knows the person she’s talking to.

It’s Abby’s dad, Garrett.

“Oh there you are,” he says, smiling,” Thought we lost you there.”

Will moves closer to Bev. “Hello.”

“I was out fishing and I heard some voices. I didn’t expect to see the two of you.”

“We were just swimming,” Will says.

“Don’t you have access to the lake at your parents’ houses?”

“We wanted to be alone,” Bev says, wrapping her arm around him, “You know.”

Mr. Hobbs laughs. “Oh I get it! My little Abby isn’t looking for a boyfriend yet but I know she will soon. I’ll leave you be, but be careful. Never know what’s in the water with ya.”

“We will.”

They don’t move until they’re sure he’s far enough away.

“What did he say to you?”

“He said he ‘heard voices’ and wondered if I was talking to someone special. I didn’t see a fishing pole, did you?”

Will frowns. “No. Maybe he left it somewhere.”

“I guess.”

They don’t move and still stare after him.

“He doesn’t know Abby likes girls?”

“He doesn’t want Abigail to like ANYONE, let alone a girl. He’s a fucking creper, Will. I swear one of these days someone is gonna find a bunch of bodies in his basement.”

Will remembers the smell of blood on him at the mall and his teeth feel heavy in his mouth.

“Yeah.”

“I wanna go,” Bev says, “I know you probably want to stay but...I feel like he’s watching us.”

Will nods.

They change out of their wet bathing suits and drive away from the clearing, still a bit shaken.

“Does he live out here?”

“Nope,” Bev says, “That’s what makes it weirder. What if he saw you?”

Will puts a hand on his belly. “I didn’t hear anything until I went under. If he saw anything it wasn’t clear enough.”

“Still...next time we should swim by your place.”

“Yeah.”

They drive back toward civilization after that, and stop by the nearest Fuller’s for some food. Will gets two fish sandwiches and some fries while Bev just gets some nuggets. She watches him eat with a huge smile on her face.

“Are the tadpoles happy?”

He sticks his tongue out at her. “Shut up.”

She laughs.

“I’m just saying, we can get some more food if they…”

Will pokes her. “If you don’t stop I’ll sic my tadpoles AND my other boyfriend after you!”

Bev put her hands up. “Okay, okay!”

He drives her back home by mid-afternoon, and they share a hug before she leaves.

“Tell me if he grovels,” she teases, “You deserve all the groveling.”

Will frowns. “I don’t even want to see him.”

“Will..”

“I’ll text you later.”

The drive back home feels longer than it really is and when Will pulls up he parks without going inside. He knows he has to eventually but it feels safer in the car for now. Will sighs and leans back to stare out at the water.

Maybe it would be better if he just went out there into the water and never came back.

He’d miss Bev and his Dad, for sure, but he could still come see them sometimes.

Will blinks back tears as the thought of going into the house makes his stomach hurt. He’s so focused on the water that the knock on the window startles him.

Hannibal looks just as bad as he feels, one hand just under his neck as if he was clutching his chest.

He rolls down the window. “What?”

He pulls his hand away and Will’s breath catches.

He’s wearing the tie.

“Will...I need to apologize.”

Will shakes his head. “No, you...just throw it away. I don’t care anymore.”

Hannibal has tears in his eyes as he shakes his head. “May I come into the car?”

Will wants to say no.

The word lingers on his tongue.

But he unlocks the door anyway.

Hannibal walks around the car and comes inside, his scent hitting Will all at once. He’s missed it, missed *him*, and the tears can’t seem to stop falling once they start.

“I don’t need your pity,” Will hisses, “It’s just a stupid tie.”

He watches Hannibal pull the tie out from his suit coat, and touch it almost lovingly.

“This is the first gift you’ve ever given me,” he says, “I...I was quite happy to receive it.”

“No, you weren’t.”

“Yes, I was.”

“Then why…”

“I must confess that I...let my jealousies get the best of me.”

Will wipes tears from his face. “Jealousy?”

“You’re very close with Beverly.”

He frowns. “So?”

“I feel as if you’re closer with her then you are with me.”

“You sent us out yesterday! You offered to help her with her girlfriend! You...I don’t understand why you’d do all that if you’re---”

Hannibal sighs. “I wanted her to like me, which is strangely childish. I feel very selfish when it comes to you, Will. I wanted to hurt you, I will admit that.”

“Well, you did.”

“It hurt me very much to see you in pain, and I regretted it immediately.”

Will looks away. “But you didn’t come to my room,” he mumbles, “*She* did.”

“Leanne was happier than she should’ve been to see us fighting.”

He sneers. “Of course she was.”

“Will...I can’t ask for your forgiveness but I wanted to apologize. I’ll leave you alone now, and the door will be open when you’re ready.”

Will turns as Hannibal reachs for the door and he grabs his arm.

“Don’t.”

Hannibal frowns at him. “You want me to stay?”

“Is Leanne awake?”

“No, she’s resting.”

Will sighs and climbs across the car to his lap. Hannibal wraps arms around him tight as Will nuzzles his neck. “I’m still mad at you.”

“You have every right to be.”

“But I want you to stay with me.”

“Where else would I go?”

They sit in the car for a long while and watch the sun go down. Will’s whole body feels relaxed just being close like this, and Hannibal nuzzles his cheeks making him sigh.

“I hope you had a good day regardless of my childishness.”

“A little,” Will mumbles, “I went swimming with Bev.”

He feels Hannibal tense up under him. “I see. Did that go well?”

“For the most part,” He sighs, “But Mr. Hobbs showed up.”

“Strange.”

“Yeah, he really is.”

“Perhaps next time you should swim here.”

“Bev said that too.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I’m happy you have such a strong friendship with Beverly,” he whispers, “Even if I would rather have you all to myself.”

Will pulls back to frown at him. “You know you’re...even if I don’t share everything with her that I do you that doesn’t make you any less important. Right?”

Hannibal frowns. “I’m perfectly fine with…”

He moves to straddle him and turns Haninbal’s chin up to stare into his eyes.

“I...lov...*care* about you,” Will says, his chest aching, “I’ve never felt like this with anyone else.”

Hannibal’s smile is so wide Will can almost feel his happiness himself. “I care about you as well, Will. Very, very much.”

They kiss softly, barely touching, and it’s more intimate than anything Will’s ever experienced so far.

He touches Will’s cheek and stares at him intently. “And there’s *nothing* that would make me care for you any less. Absolutely nothing.”

Will puts hand on his belly as it starts to hurt. “You don’t...you can’t know that.”

“Yes, I can.”

He lays his head on Hannibal’s shoulder and shivers when Hannibal’s hand joins the one he has on his belly.

“I’m not ready to share everything,” Will whispers, “Not yet.”

“I am here when you are,” Hannibal promises, rubbing his belly, “And always will be.”

He closes his eyes.

“Hannibal…”

“We can stay here all night if you’d like.”

He laughs. “No, I...I want to go inside.”

Hannibal lifts Will’s chin and kisses him again hard, almost bruising, and Will sighs when he pulls away.

“Lead the way.”

They walk back to the house holding hands and end up having a very laid back dinner of bacon sandwiches along with avocado sorbet. Will eats two sandwiches, and his own sorbet along with half of Hannibal’s.

He’s warm all over and happy as they head for his bedroom.

Hannibal takes off everything but his boxers and...the tie. Will whimpers as he pulls him into his arms, and soon the heat overtakes him. He comes in Hannibal’s fist, moaning in his mouth, and Hannibal ruts against his hand minutes later panting for breath.

They fall asleep before Will can even turn anything on to watch.

He doesn’t need it.

Will is safe in Hannibal’s arms, and there’s nowhere else he’d rather be.

Chapter 35

The smell of bacon wakes Will up the next morning, and his stomach rumbles as sniffs the air.

“Wha…?”

“Open.”

He opens his mouth and chews the bacon, moaning as he opens his eyes.

Hannibal is fully dressed and laying beside him holding a plate. “Good morning.”

Will smiles. “Good morning.”

He holds out another piece and Will bites down eagerly.

“I woke early and thought you might like breakfast in bed this morning.”

Will licks his lips and takes a piece of bacon off the plate holding it out to him. “Open.”

Hannibal opens his mouth and Will sticks the bacon inside, smiling as he chews.

“Are you pleased?”

“Very.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “I...must again apologize for my childish jealousy yesterday.”

Will sighs. “You don’t--”

He puts his hand on Will’s cheek. “Yes, I do. I hurt you, Will, and you did not deserve it.”

Will takes the plate and puts it on his bedside table before he climbs in Hannibal’s lap. He kisses him and nuzzles his cheek. “I forgive you.”

“I promise not to react that way again. Your friendship with Beverly is...quite strong and I want you to have allies while you’re here. She’s been a very good friend to you.”

Will hugs him. “Yeah, she has.”

Hannibal rubs his back. “Are you going to see her today?”

“I dunno,” he sighs, laying his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, “Did you have something more fun for me to do?”

“I thought perhaps we’d go in the boat.”

Will lifts his head. “Yeah?”

Hannibal's smile doesn't reach his eyes. "I thought perhaps we'd bring Leanne."

He moves off him. "What? Why?"

"Will…"

"Why would we bring her?" he asks, climbing off the bed, "She...I don't even want to be around her, Hannibal."

"I know, Mielasis," he sighs, reaching for Will who doesn't move, "But...she's…people may start to talk if they see us alone together too often."

"She sleeps eighteen hours a day!" Will nearly shouts, "She has no friends, no family, so tell me why you'd even think anyone would care."

Hannibal frowns. "Someone already has spoken to me about it."

Will blinks. "What?"

"One of our neighbors, a Mister McClaine, says he saw us together on the boat a few days ago. Asked where Leanne was, and seemed a bit...inquisitive."

Will's stomach clenches. "What did you say?"

"I told him she was ill," Hannibal says, frowning still, "He did not seem to believe me."

He moves in closer and takes a piece of bacon, biting down as his stomach hurts.

"I don't want to go with her."

Hannibal reaches out to touch his hand and entwines their fingers together. "I understand."

"But if you think---"

He pulls Will in close and hugs him. "No," he whispers, nuzzling Will's neck, "No, I...don't wish for her to come either."

Will smiles. "We need to get a pool or something," he laughs, "Then no one would bother us."

"Leanne would be an obstacle."

"I'm not scared of her," Will mumbles, kissing his cheek, "And...there's always whatever you do to knock her out."

Hannibal lifts his head up and smiles at him. "You no longer worry about her health?"

Will's lip curls. "Does she worry about mine?"

Hannibal puts both hands on his face. "No."

“Then fuck her.”

Hannibal kisses him again. “Finish your bacon, and you can help me in the kitchen after you dress.”

Will laughs. “Why can’t I help now?”

Hannibal kisses the mark on his neck. “Because you know I can’t resist you this way for much longer.”

He kisses Hannibal’s cheek. “I know. I just wanted to hear you say it.”

“Did it make you happy to hear?”

“Yeah.”

Hannibal pulls back to look into his eyes. “Why?”

“Because I like that you’re into me so much,” Will whispers, blushing, “And...I like being into you so much too.”

He touches Will’s cheek. “Your eagerness is, as always, devastatingly alluring.”

“Hannibal,” Will whispers, and leans in just as Hannibal moves away to stand.

“I need to begin our lunch or we will never leave. There’s plenty of time left in the day, Will. Do not worry about that.”

Will’s mouth hurts, he’s smiling so much. “I’ll be quick.”

“I know.”

He starts opening up drawers even before Hannibal leaves his bedroom and finds the only swimsuit he has left not washed is that pink speedo he thought he’d never wear. Will blushes as he pulls it on and puts his shorts over it.

It’s a little tight, maybe too tight for only having worn it just a few days ago, and he pulls it under his belly rubbing the mark it leaves.

He sighs.

“I gotta start exercising or something,” he mumbles, “You’re really starting to make it hard for me to find anything to wear.”

His belly rumbles and he remembers the bacon left over, grabbing the last few pieces as he finds a striped blue tank top.

The taste makes him moan, it’s the best bacon he’s ever tasted, and when he starts heading for the kitchen he’s eager to be near Hannibal again.

He finds him in the midst of cooking something with rice, and watches leaning against the counter.

“I can see you.”

“I know,” Will says, “What are we having?”

“I took the leftover fish and cut it into a rice dish with lemon. It’s a milder stir fry.”

Will comes up behind and wraps his arms around him. “I like spicy stuff, you don’t have to make it mild.”

“Next time I suppose.”

Will sighs. “It smells good.”

“You smell like bacon.”

He laughs. “I ate the rest of the plate.”

“Good,” Hannibal says, “A growing young man needs to eat.”

“I’m already getting a bigger stomach because of all the food you’re feeding me.”

Hannibal smiles and kisses him. “Is that a bad thing?”

“It is for my clothes.”

“I can buy you new clothes.”

“Hannibal…”

He takes the spoon out of the pan and grabs Will, turning them around.

“I am more than happy to give you anything you need.”

Will smiles. “I know, but I don’t want you to waste all your money on me.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I have plenty of money, and there’s no one who I’d love to spend it on more.”

He blushes. “Ok.”

“That will be our plans for tomorrow then,” Hannibal says, grabbing the spoon again, “But for now I will finish lunch and you can find us a thermos to put the lemonade in.”

Will pulls away from him and goes to the pantry, coming back with the thermos and grabbing the last of the lemonade from the fridge. He catches glimpses of Hannibal as he pours, watching him put the rice into two containers, and they lock eyes smiling at each other.

“I wish we could do this everyday.”

Hannibal frowns. “Will…”

He closes the thermos and carries it as he goes to the door. “I’ll meet you outside.”

Will shakes his head as tears fill his eyes. “Stupid, stupid,” he mumbles, walking through the dining room and stopping at the door.

He puts his head against the door. “Stupid.”

“Will.”

He hurries through all the way outside, and goes right to the boat.

His phone vibrates as he puts the lemonade in the mini fridge and he sits down, wiping his eyes.

You ok?

Yeah. He said he was sorry. He’s a little jealous of you.

Me? Lol. Sounds fake, but ok.

Will smiles.

Are you ok?

Yeah, I’m fine. Don’t worry. How’re the tadpoles?

He laughs.

I could barely put on my speedos today so they’re in trouble.

Oh god, you’re wearing speedos? Pics or it didn’t happen.

No way!

Pleeeasse?

NO!

He stuffs the phone into his pocket just as Hannibal comes up the dock. Will turns away, working on his seat belt, and tries not to feel too stupid for what he said.

The silence is deafening, and Will’s stomach churns as Hannibal closes the mini fridge before sitting down beside him.

“Will.”

He looks up. “I’m fine.”

Hannibal takes his hand. “I wish we could too.”

Will sighs. “Hannibal…”

He squeezes their hands together. “Someday we will, I promise.”

Will smiles.

“I believe you.”

The boat roars to life as he turns the key and pulls them away from the dock. Will doesn’t even look back at the house, happy to be away, and closes his eyes to take in the freedom of being on the water.

He breathes in the scent in the air, feeling it ripple over him, and when he opens his eyes again his vision is red. Will doesn’t look at Hannibal but doesn’t close his eyes again.

This feels right.

It really does.

Hannibal drives them past the spot they usually hid in, and Will frowns at him. “Where are we going!?” he asks loudly.

“You’ll see!”

He sees a few boats in the distance as they pass but no one waves or seems to care.

Will’s never been out this far before, and the longer they ride the more he’s confused.

“Hannibal, where---!?”

Hannibal turns off the boat once they’ve gotten to an area not at all in shadow. Will can feel the sun on him as they stop and Hannibal smiles. “I thought we would go somewhere else today.”

“People will see us.”

He pulls his shirt over his head and Will’s eyes take in his chest. “I wasn’t planning on anything other than a perfectly platonic swim. Let them see.”

Will frowns. “Okay.”

Hannibal shimmies out of his pants, and WIll takes in the turquoise speedo he’s wearing that leaves little to the imagination.

“Are you not coming with me?”

Will takes off his shirt and blushes. “I am, I was just…”

“Admiring me.”

He smiles. “Yeah.”

“Good.”

Hannibal dives over the edge of the boat into the water and Will takes off his shorts before he looks down at him. “Is that all you’ve got?”

The dumbfounded expression Hannibal has makes him frown.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Hannibal says, “You...your swimsuit. I’ve...you look very handsome.”

Will smiles. “I thought this was platonic.”

“So did I.”

He jumps over the side of the boat and the immediate feeling makes his skin ripple. Will fights to keep his shift before he emerges, and Hannibal is there waiting.

“Don’t you wish you’d parked us somewhere secluded now?”

Hannibal shakes his head, the water dripping down his face. “If I had I wouldn’t be able to see the sun worshipping you so vehemently. I’ve never seen a more beautiful creature, not in all my life.”

Will grins. “You don’t have to flatter me, you know. You’ve already got me.”

He smiles. “I know.”

“Can you catch me?”

“I believe so.”

Will’s whole body fills with warmth. “Then...catch me.”

He dives underwater fast and takes off, heading for the darkest parts of the water. The thrill of the chase makes him hum in anticipation, and when he’s suddenly grabbed from behind his immediate happiness turns to dread.

It’s not Hannibal.

Will growls, hissing as the green finned creature fights to drag him.

“NO!” he screams, tail thrashing.

The creature bites his arm and he rushes back at it with all his strength freeing himself. He swims back toward the boat in tears, blood dripping from his arm, and crashes right into Hannibal when he resurfaces.

“Will! What’s happened?”

“Something got me,” Will lies, shaking his head, “I’m bleeding, I…”

Hannibal's eyes seem red even in the shadow. "Something?"

"I need to get to the boat," Will hisses, "It...it hurts."

He pulls Will close as they swim back slowly, and he lifts him up into his arms even before climbing on the boat again.

Will shivers as Hannibal looks for the first aid kit, and tears fill his eyes.

How did it follow them all the way out here?

Hannibal kneels at Will's feet as he cleans his wound. "Do you think it was a water snake?"

Will shakes his head. "I don't know."

He presses his lips to the wound and Will shivers. "I should've accompanied you."

"You didn't…"

Hannibal puts the bandage over the wound and sighs. "I told you not to go off alone and I recklessly let you. I...I should've been more careful."

Will pulls him in close and Hannibal lays his head against Will's bare belly.

"I'm fine."

"Yes, but…"

"I'm fine."

Hannibal sighs. "I should look into getting that pool."

WIll laughs. "Yes, you should."

"I should get up or others will see."

"I don't mind."

Hannibal smiles at him. "I know."

Will reaches out to touch his face but Hannibal stands, moving away back to his seat.

"We shouldn't be doing this here."

"Okay."

He goes to start the boat again just as someone yells out.

"Ahoy there!"

Both of them turn to see a familiar face drive up alongside them.

“Hello, Mister Hobbs.”

Will puts a hand on his belly. “Hi.”

Garrett Hobbs frowns at Will’s arm, just as Abigail looks away. “You get a little cut there, Will?”

“Yeah I think a water snake got me.”

“Water snake? Not sure I’ve seen any of them around here, have you Abbs?”

Abigail shakes her head.

“Will seems to attract them,” Hannibal says.

“Yeah, well he’s lookin’ a little blue. Not as blue as the last time I saw him though.”

Will frowns.

“What?”

“Enjoy your day guys! Be careful out there!”

He pulls away from them fast and Will is still confused.

“Will? What did Mr. Hobbs mean?”

Will shakes his head. “Bev and I ran into him yesterday,” he says, “We were swimming alone together in a clearing. I’m not even sure why he was there.”

Hannibal’s skin suddenly turns almost bright blue as he looks off where Mr. Hobbs left.

“He saw you.”

“Yeah, and we saw him.”

Hannibal closes his eyes. “I see.”

“Hannibal?”

He lets out a long breath before he opens his eyes again. “I think we should return to the house and check your wound.”

“I’m fine,” Will says, “I…”

“I would feel much better if we did. We can still have lunch there.”

“But…”

Hannibal starts the engine and drives off without waiting for Will to finish. He feels like he’s missing something but goes back to what Mr. Hobbs said.

Not as blue as the last time I saw him though.

He puts his hands on his belly as a million thoughts fill his head.

Did Mr. Hobbs see his true form or was he joking about something else?

Is that what upset Hannibal so much or was it something else?

Will's stomach churns further and further the more the drive and suddenly he can't hold it in anymore.

"STOP! STOP!"

Haninbal stops and WIll rushes to the boat's edge , throwing up everything he ate this morning. He feels Hannibal brush the hair back from his face as he groans and he falls back against him.

"Will."

"Maybe we should go back," he sighs, "I'm not feeling very good."

He helps Will back to his chair and Will straps himself in again. The boat moves slower this time when Hannibal takes off, and by the time they're back home Will can barely keep his eyes open.

"Will?"

"Hmm?"

"We've returned."

Will shakes himself and undoes his belt, standing on wobbly legs. Hannibal takes out their lunch and helps him into the house. Will leans on him as they head into his bedroom, and pulls off his speedos before climbing under his sheets.

Hannibal sits on the edge of the bed and sighs.

"Better?"

"A little," he mumbles, "Though I'd feel better if you laid down with me."

Hannibal kisses his forehead.

"Later, Mielasis. I promise. For now, just rest. I will get you some water."

Will feels his eyes grow heavy as he suddenly falls asleep, only to wake up when Hannibal returns.

"Will?"

"Mmm?"

“There’s something we need to discuss.”

He can barely keep his eyes open when he smiles. “Something good?”

Hannibal sighs. “No, I’m afraid not.”

Will frowns. “What’s wrong?”

“Did anything else happen on your outing yesterday?”

His head feels muddled as he nods. “Yeah.”

“Anything bad?”

Will smiles. “I saw a dog.”

“Did you?”

“Mmm hmm,” he says, taking Hannibal’s hand, “And I saw...Matt. Gross.”

“He was getting a dog?”

“He works there,” Will says, sighing, “He’s such a…”

Hannibal squeezes his hand and for the first time Will sees true fear in his eyes.

“I...I’m scared that something might happen to you, Will.”

“What?”

“I’m afraid I must ground you temporarily. It’s in your best interests.”

Will suddenly feels much more awake. “What?”

“You see…”

He sits up, pushing his hand away. “I’m grounded? What am I, ten years old?”

“Will…”

“You can’t just ground me because you….”

Hannibal puts both hands on his cheeks. “Yes, I can.”

Will pushes him off. “Fuck off! You...what am I being punished for?”

“Not looking after yourself,” Hannibal says, standing, “Your recklessness…”

He laughs. “What? MY recklessness?”

“Will…”

“You said you wouldn’t pull some childish jealousy shit again, *Mister* Lecter.”

Hannibal frowns. “That is not---”

“Just get out of my room.”

He turns away from him and hears Hannibal leave.

Grounded?

Was he serious?

Will reaches for his shorts on the floor and pulls out his cell.

Hannibal just grounded me.

What?

For not looking after myself

Will, that’s...what does he think you’ve been doing?

I don’t know but it just came out of nowhere.

Nothing weird happened?

Will pauses.

I got sick.

Again? The tadpoles are doing a number on you.

He frowns and rubs his belly.

It was just a reaction to the boat that was all.

And the car?

Will sets his phone down and sighs.

He didn’t feel like he was sick, not at all, but getting sick two days in a row was weird for him.

He never got sick.

Will looks down at his belly.

“There’s no way.”

He closes his eyes and sighs.

Between this thing with Hannibal, the bullshit with Matt, the allure of blue fin, and the terror of green fin he didn't have any room for another crisis.

Nope.

He was just sick.

That was all.

It had to be.

Chapter 36

Will doesn't come out of his room for the rest of the afternoon, though Hannibal leaves him lunch outside his door that he reluctantly eats because he's hungry.

He leaves the tv on but doesn't pay much attention to it, angry and sad both as he tries to figure out why Hannibal flipped on him so fast.

"Grounded," he mumbles, sipping what's left of his juice as his stomach aches, "Stupid."

Bev tries to call a few times but he texts her back and tells her he'll talk to her later.

This day has been shit and he's so messed up right now he's not sure it's a good idea.

Will takes a nap just after three and wakes up to a knock at his door.

"Wha?"

"I know you're quite angry with me," Hannibal says, his voice muffled through the door, "But I'm leaving you some things to eat along with a few bottles of water. If you're ill, it's best if you remain hydrated."

Will's stomach hurts at the sound of his voice. "Am I supposed to *thank* you?"

"No."

He waits for the sound of his footsteps to recede and opens the door to a plate of cookies, some crackers, and even a peanut butter sandwich on a tray where four bottles of water sit. Will takes a peanut butter cookie and doesn't touch the sandwich leaving it all on his dresser.

Will lies back in bed and stares up at the ceiling.

Hannibal hadn't even said how long he was grounded for, just that his "reckless" behavior was the cause.

Did that mean he would be stuck inside all summer?

He picks up his phone and calls the one person who might make him feel better.

"Well, well, well," his father says, *"I see you remembered me. What happened to every other day?"*

Will smiles. *"I was busy,"* he sighs, *"I'm sorry, Dad.*"

"It's ok, Kid. How are you?"

Will takes a bite of his cookie as tears fill his eyes. *"I...I don't know."*

"Will, you can tell me anything."

He puts a hand on his belly. *"You told me before that I never got sick as a kid, right?"*

"Yeah, you were and still are pretty much the healthiest person I know."

"I've never gotten sick?"

There was a pause.

"Dad?"

"What is this about, Son?"

He sighs. *"I've been feeling sick lately, that's all, and it's freaking me out."*

His Dad is quiet.

"How sick?"

"Just throwing up a few times."

"Have you been swimming?"

Will frowns and sits up. *"What does that have to do with anything?"*

"Answer the question, Will. Have you?"

"Yeah."

He hears his father sigh. *"Will...I think I need to come down there. Maybe I should bring you home."*

"What does swimming have to do with you bringing me home? What...Dad, tell me."

Another pause. *"Are you safe, Kid? Do you feel safe?"*

Will looks over at his dresser and puts a hand on his belly. *"Yes."*

"You feelin' ok? Still sick?"

"No, I just...Dad please just tell me what's going on."

"Your mama she...well there's a lot of stuff I haven't told you and I don't think doing it over the phone is the best idea."

Will's stomach hurts and he rubs it. *"I don't want to go home,"* he whispers, blinking back tears, *"I'm...not yet. I miss you but I'm just…"*

There's another long pause.

“Two more weeks, Kid. That’s all I’m giving you. If things are ok next time I call then I’ll let you finish out the summer there but...if it’s not...I’ll bring you home.”

He closes his eyes. *“Ok, Dad.”*

“I love you, Kid. I’m just...I want you to be safe.”

“I love you too, Dad. I’ll call you in two weeks, ok?”

“Ok, Kid. I hope you feel better.”

“I just have to stay out of the water, right?”

There was a pause. *“Do you want to stay out of the water, Will?”*

A tear fell down Will’s cheek. *“No I don’t.”*

“Then don’t. Just be careful.”

Will lets out a long breath. *“I will. Goodnight, Dad.”*

“Goodnight, Will.”

He ends the call and curls up on his side.

Two weeks?

Maybe being grounded was a good idea after all.

Will picks up his phone and calls Bev.

“Hey, I thought you weren’t up to a call.”

He sighs. *“I called my Dad.”*

“Bad news?”

“He wants to bring me home.”

Bev is quiet. *“Soon?”*

“Two weeks,” Will mumbles, *“I...I think he knows something about…”*

“You being a….water snake?”

Will laughs. *“Bev…”*

“I know, I know, I just...do you want to go home, Will?”

He shakes his head. *“No.”*

“Then maybe the punishment from Hannibal is a good thing. Nothing bad can happen to you in the house that might piss off your Dad, right?”

“There’s always Leanne.”

Bev scoffs. *“She can’t hurt you, and if she even tries...she’ll have to go through me.”*

“Bev…”

“You wanna Skype later? We can watch something maybe?”

“Yeah, that sounds good.”

“I’ll text you.”

“Ok, Bev.”

“Good luck in captivity, Will. Hug the tadpoles for me.”

He puts a hand on his belly and smiles. *“I will.”*

The call ends and he puts the phone down to go back to the movie. It’s mindless entertainment but after a few more cookies and an ending that’s gore filled he’s blissfully numb by the time the credits roll.

Will gets up from the bed to grab his laptop when there’s a knock at the door.

He freezes immediately.

“Yeah?”

“May I come in?”

“Why?”

“Will, please.”

Will sighs and opens the door to see Hannibal frowning at him. “What?”

“How are you feeling?”

“What do you want, Dr. Lecter?”

“Will…”

“I’m fine,” he lies, “And I’m not hungry.”

“I didn’t ask that.”

“I don’t want you in here, so you can just go.”

Hannibal sighs. “Your father called me.”

Will blinks. “What?”

“He says you called him to say you were sick and he’s worried about you. I assured him I would look after you and that you’d been grounded. He seemed a bit taken aback but when I told him what’s been happening…”

He rears back and almost growls. “You told my Dad on me!?”

“Will, you’ve been hurt many times already by your recklessness, and this Matthew…”

“He’s a creep who wants to fuck me, Dr. Lecter, not a monster! He’s...I can’t even believe you!”

Hannibal’s jaw tightens. “Was I supposed to lie to your father, Will? Tell him everything was ok?”

“No, but---”

“He was worried for your safety, and as I am as well we saw eye to eye. He told me he’d given you two weeks to be sure you were safe and comfortable and I got him to change his mind.”

Will relaxes even in his anger. “How?”

“I told him I’d grounded you for the next month and that seemed sufficient to make him feel better about everything.”

His vision suddenly seeps into a deep crimson and he turns away, his teeth heavy in his mouth.

“A month?”

“Yes.”

“You’re just gonna keep me hostage for a…”

Hannibal touches his shoulder and he rears back, growling. “I’m keeping you safe.”

Will laughs. “You...all this talk about....you act like you trust me and then…you pull this. Did you tell Leanne?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll bet she’s pissed.”

“She thinks you’re a young man and should be given freedom, but we discussed it and I got her to agree with me.”

“I could just go home.”

Will closes his eyes tight as he feels Hannibal come up behind him and he can't resist leaning back into his arms.

"You don't want to go home, I know you don't."

"I hate you."

Hannibal turns his cheek and kisses it softly. "No, you don't."

Will glares at him with tears in his eyes. "Just go. I…"

He kisses Will's neck. "Do you really want me to go?"

Will pushes him back roughly and growls. "GO!"

Hannibal says nothing when he leaves and Will waits for the door to close so he can lock it behind him. He goes to the window after and looks out, desperate for the lake. His hand comes to rest on his belly as he sighs.

"I can run, right?" he whispers, "I can climb out the window and just run into the water. We...I'd be safe there."

His stomach rumbles.

"I'm sorry," he sighs, "I know you're hungry."

Will turns to look at the peanut butter sandwich now hours old.

"I'm going crazy, that has to be it."

The sandwich doesn't even look good but he goes to his dresser and picks the whole thing up anyway. The first bite makes him moan, and he sucks it down so fast he barely has time to taste it.

Then four seconds later his stomach lurches and he rushes from his room to throw it all up into the toilet. He hugs the toilet, shaking, and turns to see Hannibal in the doorway.

"I think I'm sick," he whispers, "I…I…"

Hannibal comes across the room and picks Will up into his arms. Will is shaking when he brings him back into the room, and he buries his face into Hannibal's neck as Hannibal rubs his back. "I know."

"Don't go," Will whispers, "I'm...really mad at you but...please just…stay with me."

"Where else would I go, Mielasis?"

Will's stomach feels a little better as Hannibal holds him tighter.

"You really *are* worried about me?" he asks, "That's all grounding me really is?"

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Yes.”

Will sighs. “I don’t want to go home,” he whispers, “I...I want to stay.”

“I want you to stay too, Mielasis, I...Will, please just…I need you to trust me.”

Will lifts his head and frowns down at him. “I do.”

Hannibal brushes the curls from his face. “Then trust that I want what’s best for you and...this is best.”

He shakes his head. “Hannibal…”

“Matthew and Hobbs are dangerous, Will. I know you don’t believe this, but...please, just...trust me.”

“I feel like there’s a lot you haven’t told me.”

“And there are things you haven’t told me,” Hannibal whispers, “Aren’t there?”

Will frowns. “Yes.”

“You say you trust me, and yet...you won’t tell me.”

He looks away. “It’s not---”

Hannibal grabs his hand. “For now,” Hannibal says, squeezing his hand, “Trust that I want you to be safe and...care for you deeply.”

Will nods. “Ok.”

He kisses Will’s hand. “Thank you. I’ve been quite melancholic all day missing you and thought you’d never speak to me again.”

Will lays his head on Hannibal’s chest and sighs. “That will never happen. I might be mad at you but...you’re *you*. I...I need you, Hannibal.”

“I need you too, Will. Very much.”

He feels his belly start to rumble and lifts his head. “And even though I feel sick I’m...starving.”

Hannibal smiles. “I’ll have to leave to make you something but...I’ll be sure it’s good for your stomach issues. If that’s alright?”

He smiles. “Yeah.”

“I would kiss you but--”

Will laughs. “I’ll go brush my teeth.”

“Alright.”

He waits until Hannibal is gone into the bathroom again, and brushes his teeth before looking at the shower. The water seems to call to him so much so that he’s already naked and in the tub before he turns on the water.

Will’s whole body shivers as the cool water goes over him, and he shifts without trying soaking up all he can. He feels immensely better by the time he’s there for a while, and he leaves without even cleaning himself at all.

He wraps a towel around himself and opens the door to see Leanne waiting for him.

She smiles in a strangely panicked way.

“Will! You’re...wet.”

“Um...yes?”

“Feel better?”

He steps back. “A little.”

“Good, good,” she says, looking down and not saying more.

“So I’m gonna go get dressed in my room.”

“Yes, you should do that,” she mumbles, letting him pass, “Feeling better is good.”

Will stares at her the whole time he passes and locks the door behind him.

What the fuck?

He dresses in some pajama pants and a t-shirt, laying down again to wait for Hannibal.

Leanne doesn’t knock on his door and he’s not even sure she leaves but still the whole thing was just weird.

He turns on ‘Rental Rampage’ as he finishes his juice from hours ago, feeling a million times better than he did before.

His phone tings and he sees Bev texted.

Movie?

Not feeling so good. Maybe tomorrow?

*Okay. *hugs**

There’s another knock and Will stands to open the door even before Hannibal says a word.

He smiles at him as he brings in a tray with a bowl on it.

“Soup?”

“Yes, it’s..silkie chicken in a broth mixed with...”

Will lays down on the bed and smiles. “You made me chicken soup?

Hannibal frowns as he sets the tray down over Will’s legs. “Yes, I suppose. Though this particular chicken is prized for its medicinal qualities, and I’ve added a few other things.”

Will smiles and takes his first sip, sighing as it goes down.

“It’s good.”

“Thank you.”

He watches Will eat until the whole bowl is empty and takes the tray ready to go.

“Wait.”

Hannibal turns to look at him. “Yes?”

“Stay with me tonight?”

Hannibal smiles. “You wish me to?”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

“Then I shall.”

Will watches him go and rubs his belly. “Happy now?”

His stomach doesn’t give any reply.

He smiles.

The next weeks might be boring as hell and he might have to stick around at home with a mother who hates him but for now he feels good.

Will looks down at his belly.

And his sickness seems to be going away.

No tadpoles.

There’s a knock and he looks up to see Hannibal smiling in the doorway. “I’ve made popcorn.”

Will smiles. “Where’s Leanne?”

“She’s...detained.”

“Then get over here, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal walks into his room, locks the door, and comes to lay with Will. He kisses Will’s cheek.

“I thought I’d never get to do this again, Mielasis. I…”

Will smiles at him. “I’m still mad,” he whispers, “But...it’s you. I could never stay mad at you.”

Hannibal holds him tighter as Will lays his head on his chest. “I will take note of that for future reference.”

He smiles.

“You gonna do something else to piss me off then?”

“I’ll try not to, but...I won’t make any promises.”

Will nuzzles his neck and sighs. “That’s all I ask.”

Chapter 37

Hannibal wakes him the next morning with a kiss that sparks much more until they're both moaning into it and coming into each other's fists. Will licks his hand clean after and kisses him again, and the sound Hannibal makes has him aching for more.

"Fuck," he laughs, "Good morning."

"Good morning, Will," Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, "I'm sorry but I could not resist."

He kisses him again. "Never be sorry for *that*."

"I won't be, I promise. I...missed you greatly yesterday."

Will smiles. "It was only a few hours."

Hannibal touches his cheek. "I know, but I missed you still."

"I'm still mad at you."

"I know."

Will sighs and lays his head on Hannibal's shoulder. "This grounding," he mumbles, "Can Bev come over?"

"Of course."

"So it's more of a 'don't leave the house' than an actual grounding."

"Something like that, yes."

He runs his hand over Hannibal's chest hair as his stomach rumbles. "I guess it's time for breakfast."

Hannibal pats Will's belly. "How are you feeling?"

"I haven't thrown up yet, so I guess a little better?"

"I will make something light for breakfast this morning," Hannibal says, moving to stand, "And I will try to subdue Leanne if she joins us."

Will frowns. "Can't I just have breakfast in my room? I mean, I *am* in some sort of protective seclusion so…"

"Is that what you want?"

"Kinda, yeah."

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Then I will bring breakfast to you. Though I may have to share mine with your mother if she’s awake.”

Will forces his claws not to come out as he imagines them alone together.

“No, that’s...I can come. It’s fine.”

“You’re certain?”

He nods. “Yeah.”

Hannibal smiles as he pauses just at Will’s door. “I will call you when it’s finished. Are you taking a shower this morning?”

“I just took one last night,” Will mumbles, though he really does want to shower again.

“There’s no law that says you can’t take one again.”

He blushes. “Maybe I might. I dunno.”

“Alright then,” he says, as Will gets up to grab some clothes, “And...Will?”

He looks up at him. “Yeah?”

“I promise to make your...protective seclusion...feel like less of a punishment.”

Will smiles. “Okay.”

The minute he’s gone Will grabs some random stuff from his drawers and heads right for the bathroom. He locks the door but doesn’t even bother to warm up the water. He lingers under the cool spray for longer than he probably should, letting go and shifting making every ache he had yesterday disappear.

He hates to leave the water but knows he has to, and when he gets out he dresses fast since Hannibal probably has already spent way too much time with Leanne.

Both Hannibal and Leanne are waiting in the dining room already when Will gets there.

“Good morning!” Leanne says, really all too excited for it to be nine thirty.

He nods, feigning tiredness so he doesn’t have to answer, and when he sits Hannibal’s foot touches him under the table making Will feel a million times better. .

“I was telling Hanni that I feel *amazing* today and that I really don’t need him to keep ‘doctoring’ me because I’m fine. Don’t I look fine, sweetheart?”

Will stares at her.

The grayish looking skin seems to be gone now, but she’s somewhat pale and still seems sickly to him. He frowns. “You look a little tired.”

Her instant glare makes him shiver.

“How can I look *tired*? I sleep *TWENTY* hours a day!”

Will doesn’t grab the plate that Hannibal hands him and glares back at her. “You asked me how you look, *Mom*, so I told you. You want me to lie?”

Leanne’s lip curls. “I know your *game*, Will. You just want him to *think* I look bad so that---”

Hannibal grabs Leanne’s hand across the table and she freezes, turning to look at him.

“Eat your breakfast, Leanne.”

She instantly calms, and her soft smile makes Will’s skin crawl. “Okay, baby.”

Leanne eats her breakfast slowly, not looking away from him, and Hannibal hooks his foot around Will’s ankle. He pleads with his eyes and Will sighs, grabbing his plate and not saying anything else.

She eats everything off her plate and Hannibal escorts her from the table.

Will can barely taste anything he eats while Hannibal is away, his mind reeling with thoughts of them alone.

What is he doing to her?

Is he touching her?

Holding her?

Will’s teeth feel heavy as he growls under his breath, chewing on his eggs, and when Hannibal returns he glares at him even before he sits down.

“Will?”

“Have fun?”

“Not especially, no,” Hannibal sighs, “Your mother…”

“Did you touch her again?”

Hannibal reaches across the table and takes his hand. “No, I didn’t,” he whispers, “Will, I promised you I wouldn’t touch her intimately again. I thought you trusted me.”

He sighs, eyes wet with tears, and nods. “I...I do.”

“But?”

“You have to keep up appearances.”

“Yes, but that does not mean I would break that promise.”

Will sniffles. “I’m sorry I’m like this, I...I don’t know what’s going on with me. I just…”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “It’s quite alright,” he says, smiling, “I understand jealousy, and it’s flattering that you want me all to yourself.”

Will picks up his fork and skewers a sausage before popping it into his mouth. He chews and smiles. “Maybe not *all* to myself. Just not with her. If you wanted to hang out with friends or something I wouldn’t care that much.”

Hannibal takes a bite of his food and nods. “I will remember that, though I don’t have many friends.”

“That can’t be true.”

“It’s quite true, unless you count colleagues and workers at the office.”

He frowns. “Oh.”

“Speaking of,” Hannibal says, drinking his juice, “I have to go into work later this week so if you wanted to have Beverly come stay during the day for a few days that would be just fine.”

“You didn’t tell me that.”

“It must have slipped my mind. I will be bringing Leanne for a checkup there one of those days so…”

Will froze. “What?”

“It’s just for a checkup,” Hannibal says, frowning, “She’s been very sickly the last few weeks, it’s only fair.”

Will frowns. “I’ve been sick too.”

“For one day.”

“So? What if...I mean...I could have food poisoning or be allergic to something! Or…”

Hannibal smiles. “Will.”

He looks away. “Nevermind.”

“Will, look at me.”

“No.”

“If you’d like a checkup,” he says, “I would gladly give you one when we’re alone.”

Will looks up slowly. “Wouldn’t we be alone in the office?”

“There are people there, and I don’t trust myself not to be inappropriate with you,” Hannibal whispers, his hand snaking up to touch the scratch marks on Will’s arm, “Not anymore.”

Will feels warm. “Oh.”

“In fact,” he says, smiling, “I don’t trust myself not to be inappropriate with you even now.”

He smiles. “Yeah?”

“Very much so, yes.”

Will grabs his other hand and squeezes hard. “Is this the start of the ‘less like a punishment’ time?”

“Did we not already have that time this morning?”

He grins. “We did.”

“But you want more?”

He feels warm all over. “Don’t you?”

“Will…”

He gets up from the table and sits in Hannibal’s lap, wrapping arms around his neck.

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal kisses his neck, and Will bites back a moan as he teases teeth against his skin.

“No longer sick then,” he whispers, “Are you?”

“No, no, I…”

He lifts Will up onto the table, pushing away their meal, and lays him back.

“Look at how eager you are for me,” he praises, “Are you eager, Will?”

“Please,” he whimpers, “Pl---”

Hannibal pulls down his shorts fast, nearly ripping them, and before Will can even take a breath he’s licking at his hole. He covers his mouth to keep from crying out, knowing Leanne could interrupt them, and Hannibal’s tongue drills into him roughly making Will bite his hand.

He can feel his orgasm building and meets every thrust, groaning as he nears closer to the edge.

“So wet for me,” Hannibal whispers, lifting his head, “So eager…”

Will whines. “Please, please…”

He’s panting as he pulls down his pants, lifting Will up again, and presses him against the wall before he thrusts inside. Will’s moan is cut off with his mouth, every thrust banging

against the wall as he keeps going, and he knows it's not gonna be long before they wake her.

"Will...oh Willl…"

"Don't stop," Will groans, "Oh god...don't…"

He thrusts twice more before Will spills between them, and keeps on moving biting into Will's neck hard just before he fills him. They lean against the wall as he keeps thrusting, chasing every last bit of pleasure, and when Hannibal lifts his head Will licks the blood from his lips.

"This...is why I cannot take you to the office."

Will laughs.

"Think we woke her?"

"Nothing could wake her from the sleep she's in," Hannibal whispers, pulling out, and setting Will down, "Nothing."

Will's legs are shaky as he feels cum drip down the back of his legs.

"We can always try," he teases, "Can't we?"

Hannibal smiles at him. "Later. I wouldn't want to tire you out so soon."

Will grins and pulls up his pants. "I'm gonna go clean up."

"Alright."

He backs out of the dining room, hardly able to keep his eyes off him, and walks down the hall in a happy daze.

His 'grounding' so fast hasn't been all that bad.

Will takes off everything below his waist when he's in the bathroom and wipes away the remains Hannibal left behind. His vision turns red as he remembers, and when he's done he tosses the tissue away only to pause.

He's still wet.

Will presses two fingers into his ass and feels wetness there.

"What the fuck?"

He keeps moving his fingers, the sensations building, and he pulls them out to look.

There's some sort of jelly on his fingers.

That was inside him.

Will is shaking as he stares at the jelly, and sits on the toilet.

Every time they'd had sex he felt wet, but he just thought that was how things worked.

How could he have been so stupid?

Will washes his hands with tears in his eyes and stares at himself in the mirror.

"Fuck."

How had Hannibal not noticed it?

Or had he thought Will stuck something there every time?

Will pulls up his shorts and goes back down the hall to find the table spotless. Hannibal is in the kitchen putting things away.

"All clean?"

"Yeah," he says, frowning, "Um…"

"What is it?"

Will blushes. "Nothing."

What is he supposed to say?

'Did you notice I'm dripping wet when we fuck?'

'What does sea monster ass gel taste like?'

He frowns.

"Earlier," he asks, leaning against the counter, "When you...were…"

Hannibal smiles. "When I was….?"

"Your tongue," he says, blushing, "In me."

"Yes, it was."

"You liked doing that?"

Hannibal puts away a container of eggs. "Yes, Will."

"Okay."

"Did you not enjoy it?"

"No, no!" Will says, "I did, I just...I don't know."

Hannibal closes the fridge and comes over to kiss him softly. “Is something the matter?”

Will shakes his head. “No.”

“You seem flustered.”

“No, I just...I don’t know.”

He smiles. “You can ask me anything, Will. Sexual or not.”

“It’s nothing,” He lies, “I’m fine.”

“Alright. Once I’ve finished this up we can spend the day however you’d like.”

“As long as we stay inside?”

“Yes.”

He sighs. “I mean, as long as you’re with me I don’t see why we can’t just go outside. Not even all that far. Just for a swim or---”

Hannibal puts away two more containers. “I’d feel much more comfortable if we didn’t.”

Will frowns. “Fine. I’ll go figure something out.”

“Will--”

Will leaves the kitchen, his stomach suddenly hurting, and heads back to his room to put on the first thing he sees.

He picks up his phone.

Movie today? Or are you too busy with your boyfriend?

Maybe later?

It’s fine, Will. I’ll just figure something else out.

Bev I’m just busy right now. I’m not blowing you off.

He stares at the phone far too long waiting for a response and sets it down on the bedside table with a sigh.

“Will?”

Hannibal stands in the doorway and he hates the tears that come at the sight of him.

“Bev’s mad at me.”

“I see,” he says, sitting on the edge of the bed, “I can leave and let you spend the afternoon with her if you’d like?”

Will shakes his head. “No, it’s fine. Sorry I’m just feeling like a crybaby lately.”

Hannibal wipes a tear that falls down his cheek. “No apologies needed. How is your stomach?”

He pats his belly and smiles. “Fine. No vomit today, and it’s not making me want to devour the entire house’s food supply.”

“I’m glad,” he says, touching Will’s cheek, “I’m sorry you have to go through this.”

Will frowns. “What do you mean?”

He shakes his head. “I just wish you didn’t have to feel this sickness at all.”

Will smiles. “Thankfully I have a doctor to take care of me.”

Hannibal pulls him close and Will lays against him. “Always.”

He feels his body react to being close to Hannibal, and the wetness at his backside is obvious.

How had he not noticed it before?

“Will? Are you alright?”

“Yeah,” he lies, “I’m fine.”

Hannibal’s hand comes to rest at his waist and he moves it up just a bit.

“You’re sure?”

“Yeah.”

“What is it that we’re watching?”

“I have no idea, but two people have died already and it’s only the opening credits.”

Hannibal lays back on his bed and sighs. “That sounds just fine to me.”

He smiles. “Is this what grounding is gonna be like? Horror movies and sex on the regular?”

“Is that not ok with you?”

Will laughs. “I’m just making sure it’s worth my while.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I will definitely make this worth your while.”

He closes his eyes. “That sounds just fine to me.”

Weird sea monster biology aside, so far his morning has been just like any other. There was no need to freak out, not yet. He’d have to tell Hannibal his big secret sooner or later, but for now he just wanted to enjoy this.

It might be one of the last good memories he has of this summer at all.

The movie turns into the splatter mess he hopes it would be and soon he's laughing as people get violently butchered.

"Have you always enjoyed films such as this?"

Will smiles. "Pretty much."

"Your father approves?"

"Not really. He used to try and put me onto action movie stuff when I was little but I kept sneaking the horror. It's just always been my favorite, though Dad used to joke it would turn me into some sort of homicidal maniac."

Hannibal takes his hand. "This does not look like the hand of a killer."

Will laughs. "Not yet."

He smiles at him as the credits roll. "Most people would be put off by such talk."

"I'm lucky you're not then," Will teases.

"No, I'm not," he says, kissing Will's hand, "If you did kill someone...how would you do it?"

Will feels a weird warmth at the question. "I dunno."

"I'm sure you've thought of it."

He blushes. "I guess...with my hands?"

Hannibal looks at him in a way Will has never seen before, and his teeth feel heavy in his mouth.

"Strangling?"

"Yeah," Will breathes, "Maybe even a knife, I dunno. It depends on the situation."

"Hmm…"

"What about you?" Will asks, "How would…"

"I've cut into my fair share of dead bodies," he says, making Will pause, "For my education, obviously. So I think I'd use tools though perhaps, like you said, it would depend on the situation."

Will crawls into his lap and ignores the idea he might feel the wetness that seems to seep out of him the longer the conversation goes on.

"Yeah?"

Hannibal pulls him closer. “Yes.”

“I…I think I’m ready for more again.”

“Will…”

“I’m just…”

Hannibal kisses him hard, almost biting, and Will peels down his shorts as Hannibal does the same. He takes Will in hand, gripping them together, and when he comes he moans into Hannibal’s mouth. They keep kissing, the taste of Hannibal’s mouth an addiction he doesn’t want to stop, but he pulls back knowing it would look weird not to need a breath.

Hannibal smiles at him. “Insatiable.”

“For you,” Will whispers, “Only for you.”

“I know,” he says, “And I’m very lucky for that. No one else will ever make you feel this way, no matter how hard they try.”

Will presses their foreheads together and stares into Hannibal’s almost red eyes.

“Never ever.”

“My perfect Will.”

He touches Hannibal’s cheek. “My teeth,” Will says, shaking, “I….I’d also use my teeth.”

Hannibal’s eyes darken. “Just perfect.”

He kisses him again slowly, running his tongue over Will’s teeth almost in worship, and when they part Will can barely keep himself together.

“Hannibal…”

“You can rest now,” he whispers, petting Will’s head, “I’ll wake you for lunch.”

Will sighs. “I’m not tired.”

“Rest anyway,” he teases, “We have a long month ahead of us.”

Will smiles as his eyes drift closed.

“Best grounding ever.”

Hannibal’s hand comes to his belly.

“Feeling good still?”

“Mmm hmm,” Will sighs, “The tadpoles aren’t kicking my ass today. They’re being very nice.”

Hannibal stiffens. “What?”

“Tadpoles,” he yawns, “The babies, like Bev says.”

Will doesn’t hear Hannibal’s reply, but feels his hand on his belly just before he falls asleep.

“See? He loves you already.”

Chapter 38

Hannibal wakes him way later than Will expects, though he can't be all that mad when the scent of whatever amazing lunch he brings in a covered tray is what rouses Will from his deep sleep.

"Sleep well?"

Will wipes at his eyes. "A little too much, I think," he mumbles, smiling, "I don't even remember falling asleep and I wasn't all that tired."

Hannibal sets the try down. "Perhaps your sickness made your body unable to stay awake."

"Maybe."

He uncovers the food and the smell makes Will's mouth water.

It's an obvious fish dish, with more rice than Will normally likes, and some sort of vegetables thrown in. "Is this the same stuff we didn't eat on the boat?"

"No, it's a...special dish. I cut the fish finely in hopes to keep your stomach settled."

Will smiles. "How do you just have all these fish on hand?"

"You're not the only one who enjoys seafood."

He takes a bite and sighs. "So good."

Hannibal smiles. "I'm glad."

"You're not eating?"

"I had something earlier," Hannibal says, watching him closely, "I have also made some cookies since you seemed to enjoy them."

"You're spoiling me. Dad always said he was glad I wasn't a spoiled kid."

Hannibal touches his hand on the tray. "You deserve all that you desire and more."

Will entwines their fingers together. "What I desire right now is to eat this and not get sick."

"Let us hope."

Hannibal is a bit more hands on than normal, and it's noticeable, but Will doesn't mind. He can almost feel his happiness in quiet moments like this, and it's nice.

It feels right.

Everything about being with him does.

Will finishes his lunch and Hannibal leaves with the tray to get the cookies while he lies back in his bed.

He notices his pants feel a bit tighter than normal and also his stomach seems a bit bloated.

Will pats his belly, and it's a bit harder than he's used to as well.

He feels an immediate panic as he pushes down on the small curve of his belly, and it doesn't move much.

"Um…"

"Is something the matter?"

Will looks up in surprise and pulls down his shirt. "No, it's fine."

"You were staring at your stomach," Hannibal says, coming in with a plate in his hands, "Are you feeling unwell?"

He shakes his head. "Nope, just fine."

Hannibal sits on the bed and moves to touch his belly but Will grabs his hand first.

"Will?"

"It's fine."

Hannibal frowns. "It doesn't seem that way."

"I was just feeling bloated," Will says, "Your cooking is making me gain weight, I think."

Hannibal smiles and hands him a cookie.

"That's not a bad thing."

"It will be when I end up with no clothes that fit me."

"I will just buy you more if that happens."

He laughs and bites into his cookie.

"Is there anything you *won't* buy me?"

"No, there is not."

Will feels warmth fill him at the confession. "Good to know."

There's a knock at Will's door and they both freeze.

“Um….”

Hannibal says nothing as he opens the door to Leanne, whose eyes narrow at the two of them before her expression changes into the strange wild eyed happy look from the last few days.

“How’re you feeling, honey?” she asks, sidestepping Hannibal into the room.

Will chews on his cookie. “Better.”

“Good, good,” she says, looking around before she sits down.

“Leanne---”

“I was thinking we’d go for a boat trip,” she says, not looking at either of them, “Just us two.”

Will looks at Hannibal. “I’m grounded, remember?”

She laughs and grabs Will’s wrist. “But I’d be with you!” she almost yells, “You’d be perfectly safe.”

“No, Leanne,” Hannibal says, “It’s best Will stays in.”

Leanne turns to look at him and Will can guess her expression isn’t fond. “Why do *you* have any say in what I do with my child? He’s *my* son, not *yours*.”

“I’ve already spoken to Michael and he agrees.”

She whips her head back to Will and laughs again. “MICHAEL? What does *he* even matter? He’s not---”

Hannibal begins to cross the room as Will pulls back his hand to glare at her. “He’s my father,” he growls, “Even if you say he’s not, he’s still my father.”

“He--”

Hannibal grabs her shoulder and she slumps slightly, like the wind has been knocked out of her.

Will frowns.

“Mom?”

Leanne lifts her head slowly and smiles. “My baby.”

“Leanne, it’s time for your bath.”

She stands and Will grabs her arm suddenly, not even sure why.

“What did you do?”

“There’s a technique that can calm that I learned in my studies,” Hannibal says, softly moving Will’s hand away, “She’s perfectly fine.”

“You’re sure?”

“Of course. I think it best if I help her into the bath. I will return.”

Will doesn’t even feel jealous at the idea of Hannibal helping Leanne in the bath when she looks like she’s sedated. He’s still confused as he watches them go, and finishes his cookie while setting the rest aside.

Why Hannibal isn’t taking her to his office sooner is beyond him.

She’s obviously got something wrong with her.

He picks up his phone and sees Bev hasn’t said anything since earlier.

You ok?

Three dots come up like she’s typing but then quickly go away.

He sighs.

I hope you’re not mad.

There’s no response and he sets the phone down again.

Will turns on the TV and barely pays much attention to what’s going on, but the longer he’s alone the more he thinks about Bev. He grabs his phone and calls her, sitting up again.

The phone rings twice before she answers.

“Will, you didn’t have to call.”

“I’m sorry if I blew you off,” he sighs, *“I just...it’s hard to say no to him.”*

Bev scoffs. *“You’re so cute.”*

“Still mad?”

“A little, but you called so...how are you really?”

He puts a hand on his stomach.

“The tadpoles are...sort of...possibly…”

“Will?”

“My stomach is weird.”

She’s quiet. *“Hannibal didn’t notice?”*

"No," he sighs, *"He hasn't really touched me since I noticed. Plus I noticed something else that's a little TMI probably to even tell you."*

"You can't just say something like that and NOT tell me."

Will blushes. *"I...I noticed my...when we...I get...wet."*

Bev is quiet.

"Bev?"

"It really was TMI," she says*, "I have no words."*

"Me neither."

They both burst out laughing and Will falls back on his bed. *"I can't even...I…"*

"I'm...oh god Will…"

He buries his face into his pillow as he laughs.

"I...I don't know what to do."

"I have nothing, Graham. Absolutely nothing."

He sighs, still smiling. *"I mean, he hasn't seemed to notice, so---"*

"That's weird, right? Why wouldn't he notice?"

Will frowns. *"I dunno, maybe he thinks I did something?"*

Bev is quiet again. *"Maybe,"* she whispers, *"Though it's pretty weird since he's a doctor and I'm sure you're not the first guy he's...had fun with."*

His stomach hurts thinking about Hannibal with other men. *"Probably not."*

"So it's pretty weird."

He rubs his belly. *"Bev…"*

"About the tadpoles---"

There's a knock at Will's door and he looks up in time to see Hannibal poke his head in.

"Everything alright?"

"Yeah, I'm on the phone."

Hannibal smiles. "Tell Beverly I said hello."

"Tell him I said hi back."

“She says hi,” Will says, smiling, “I’ll be done soon so---”

Hannibal shakes his head. “I have some work to catch up on, it’s fine. Enjoy your call.”

“W---”

He’s gone before Will can even say anything, and he feels the pain in his belly get worse.

“Will?”

Will frowns. *“Bev, I gotta go.”*

She sighs. *“Everytime you’re cute about him you make me miss Abby.”*

“Bev, I’m sorry. I can still talk, if you want.”

“Nah, it’s fine. I’ll call you tomorrow maybe?”

“You wanna come over?”

“Am I allowed?”

He smiles. *“It’s not that kinda grounding.”*

Bev laughs. *“Oh...kay? I can come over tomorrow for lunch or something.”*

“Sounds good to me.”

“Have a good time.”

“Bev…”

She laughs. *“Bye Will.”*

“Bye.”

He ends the call and immediately leaves for Hannibal’s office. The door is closed when he gets there, and Will doesn’t bother to knock just goes right inside.

Hannibal’s back is to him but the instant Will takes a step he turns around.

“Will,” he says, frowning, “Is everything alright?”

“Yeah, everything’s fine I just...I wanted to see you.”

“I hope you didn’t end your call on my behalf. I’m perfectly happy to lose you to Beverly for the night.”

Will stops at his side. “Are you?”

“Yes, I...I won’t let jealousy overtake me again. I promise you.”

He nods and looks at the desk. “What are you working on?”

“Just some files I hadn’t quite finished with yet, but they’re not all that important.”

Will smiles. “No?”

He reaches for Will’s waist, just bypassing his belly, and pulls him in close. Will expects him to feel the strangeness of his belly against his shirt but there’s no indication he does at all.

“Not if you’re here.”

Will kisses him softly. “How’s Leanne?”

“I helped her with a quick bath and she’s now sleeping again.”

“That was pretty quick.”

“She was very compliant.”

“I’ll say,” Will laughs, “When do you take her in to look her over?”

“I was thinking in a few days but if you’re having Beverly tomorrow perhaps…”

He frowns. “I didn’t tell you I was having Bev over.”

Hannibal blinks. “Oh, I just assumed.”

Will climbs up into his lap and laughs. “You’re just psychic now?”

“Perhaps.”

He kisses him again. “I...I wanted to talk to you about something. You said you’d give me a checkup here, if...I needed one.”

Hannibal frowns. “Yes, if your sickness persists. Have you been ill again?”

Will shakes his head. “No, but I…”

He sighs.

“Will?”

“I don’t even know how to…”

Hannibal kisses Will’s cheek. “You can tell me anything, Will. I promise you that.”

He takes Hannibal’s hand and puts it on his belly.

“I think there’s something wrong with me.”

Hannibal rubs at his belly, frowning, and looks up at Will. “This…”

“I feel...I....”

Hannibal presses down on Will’s belly. “Are you in pain?”

“No, not all the time.”

“But sometimes?”

“Yeah.”

“Will…is there something else you wish to tell me? Anything at all?”

He closes his eyes. “I…”

“This isn’t normal,” Hannibal continues, rubbing his belly, “This...I hate to say it but---”

Will feels a tear fall down his cheek.

“I’m pregnant?”

“I’ve treated patients who are expecting, Will, and I can’t be certain but…”

He grabs Hannibal’s wrist. “But you think that’s what it is.”

“Yes.”

His vision goes red as the words hit him, and he finds it hard to breathe.

“I….”

“Will...calm yourself, this…”

Will feels like he’s drowning, not able to speak, and Hannibal’s eyes widen. “Will, Will, BREATHE!”

His vision blurs as Hannibal takes him into his arms and they run down the hall into the bathroom. Hannibal sets him in the tub and turns on the water, the spray hitting them both as he smooths Will’s hair from his face.

Will feels the air come back at once as he lets out a sob, wrapping his arms around him, and Hannibal holds him tight.

“Breathe, just breathe for me.”

He takes a few shaky breaths but calms, burying his face into Hannibal’s neck.

Then it hits him.

Will pushes him back fast, confused.

“How....why did you bring me here?”

Hannibal frowns. “What?”

“The water,” he says, his voice hoarse, “Why...why did you bring me here? Why…”

“I thought perhaps the water would help assist you. There was no---”

Will touches the scratch marks on his arms, fading now, and shakes his head.

“No, you....you…”

“Will, please just---”

He moves to grab him and Will recoils, still getting wet. “You *know*.”

Hannibal freezes. “What?”

“You *know*,” he says, scrambling to sit up as he fights not to shift, “You...you know about me. About...what did she tell you?”

“Will, I haven’t a clue what you’re accusing me of but if you’d just calm down we can discuss it.”

Will shakes his head. “Get away from me.”

“Will…”

“GET OUT!”

Hannibal stands and Will grits his teeth. “What do I know, Will? Tell me.”

Will shakes his head. “You...you know about me. She told you about...whatever...she....”

He grabs Will’s arm.

“Tell me, Mielasis. Tell me what I’m being accused of.”

Will closes his eyes and lets out a breath.

“You know that I’m a monster.”

“Will…”

“I can’t believe you...you…”

“Will, open your eyes. “

“No,” he says, shutting off the water blindly as he slips down to sit in the tub, “No, no, no, n---”

Hannibal grabs his arm and Will freezes.

His hand doesn’t feel right.

“Please, Will,” Hannibal says, his voice half a growl, “Open your eyes.”

Will opens his eyes slowly, and stares wide eyed at Hannibal.

His skin is blue, scales everywhere, and his eyes are red.

“No,” he says, shaking his head, “No, you...you…”

“Will....”

“ALL THIS TIME?” Will says, ripping his arm back, “You...GET OUT! LEAVE ME ALONE! I…”

Will doesn’t stop his shift, can’t, and Hannibal stares at him in surprise.

“Will, this...this is....I thought you’d be happy. You’re not alone anymore, we...we can be together.”

He growls.

“Never,” Will hisses, “I will *never* let you touch me again. You...you did this to me. You…”

Hannibal moves away slowly, his shift reverting back as tears fill his eyes.

“I’m sorry,” he says, “But...I will not be sorry for what you carry within you.”

Will puts two hands on his belly and growls. “Get. Out.”

Hannibal leaves him alone and he curls up in the tub as tears fall down his face.

It was over.

Everything was over.

He rubs his belly. "It's just us now," he whispers, "Just us."

Chapter 39

Will doesn't even know how long he stays in the bathroom but by the time he comes out he's so numb it doesn't matter.

He walks into his bedroom and sees a tray on his dresser filled with food that he ignores, climbing under his bed sheets with his back to the door. The room smells like Hannibal still, the lingering scent of him in the air, and what once was a comfort to Will makes him want to throw up.

His hand hasn't come off his belly since Hannibal left him, and he rubs it now, tears threatening to fall again.

What was he gonna do?

How could he stay here now?

There's a part of him that knows he can't leave, not when the only person who understands what's happening to him is here, but the idea of staying seems worse than trying to figure this out on his own.

His stomach rumbles and he sighs, turning back now to see the food.

He climbs out, still naked, and grabs a cookie biting down as the taste makes him feel worse.

"I'm sorry," he whispers, rubbing his belly, "I...god…"

Will forces himself to eat two cookies and drink some water before he lays down again.

Sleep doesn't come, it's too early for that, so he dresses in some boxers and a t-shirt before walking down the hall.

The house is quiet, too quiet really, but the scent of Hannibal is hard to miss and he finds him in the kitchen.

He seems to be cooking, even though Will's sure he made dinner hours ago, and his instant pause means he knows Will is there.

"I thought you'd be asleep."

"It's not even seven," Will says, not moving.

Hannibal turns, his eyes red and skin blue, and Will feels so stupid he didn't realize everything before.

"A condition," he scoffs, shaking his head, "I'm such an idiot."

"Will…" Hannibal says, stepping closer though he stops when Will backs away.

“Don’t.”

He sighs. “I’m sure you have a lot of questions.”

“I do,” Will whispers, his voice shaking, “But I’m not sure I’ll believe any answers you give.”

Hannibal nods. “I understand that I’ve got to re-earn your trust.”

Will laughs. “You’ve got to re-earn way more than that, Dr. Lecter. You...all this time...I was so scared, I was so...alone.”

“Will…”

“I thought I was struggling with feelings I had for....oh god are you the green one too?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “No! No, Will…”

Will covers his face, shaking, as he struggles not to break.

“I promise you the...other...is not me.”

He looks up. “How can I believe that?”

“Because I would *never* hurt you.”

He laughs, leaning back against the other counter now as the tears fall so fast he can hardly stop. “Never hurt me? Hannibal, you...you’ve *broken* me.”

“Will…I…I know that I should’ve revealed myself sooner but I confess I wanted you to confide in me.”

Will shakes his head and smiles. “Of course you did. You’ve alienated me from pretty much anything but you since the moment we met.”

“That’s...not...I struggled not to want your full attention, yes. I...I’m sorry for that.”

He wipes the tears from his face and realizes he’s already shifted. “I guess I don’t have to hide this anymore. You know, I thought...I worried that you’d turn me away when I told you.”

“I know,” Hannibal sighs, “Even if I wasn’t...the same...I would not have turned you away.”

Will laughs. “Like that matters.”

“Will…”

“What are we?” Will asks, sniffling, “What...oh god are we related?”

“No, no,” Hannibal says, coming closer now but stopping again, “You...the creature who sired you is long dead.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because until the green creature arrived I had not seen any others like myself for a very long time.”

“He could still be alive.”

“No, I don’t believe he is.”

“Why?”

“Because he would’ve come for you long ago if that were the case,” Hannibal says, “We...we don’t abandon our young.”

Will rubs his belly. “How...how many?”

“I’m unsure,” Hannibal whispers, “Human hosts can hold up to seven eggs in a given cycle but my mother once birthed twelve but only one survived.”

Will feels his knees buckle and Hannibal rushes to him, and he growls, pushing him away.

“DON’T TOUCH ME!” he growls, “Don’t.”

“I’m sorry, Mielasis, I…”

“And don’t call me that,” Will whimpers, shaking his head, “Don’t.”

Hannibal nods, looking away as tears fill his eyes. “I apologize.”

“Seven,” Will says, “Why did Leanne only have one?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “I’m unsure. She remembers nothing of your birth, though I do believe your arrival has sparked some memories in her again. Perhaps she wasn’t compatible.”

Will suddenly feels a pain in his belly as the words sink in.

He laughs. “Thankfully I was, right?”

“Will, that’s---”

“That’s why I’m here, isn’t it?” he asks, the pain growing worse, “That’s...it’s why you kept badgering her’ It’s...oh god I’m…”

Hannibal shakes his head. “Perhaps that’s why I brought you here but once I met you and we...grew closer...my feelings outweighed my goal. Will, I lo---”

“DON’T YOU DARE!” Will yells, letting out a sob, “Don’t you even fucking DARE try that on me now. This...you brought me here to knock me up and then you...oh god I’m so stupid!”

“Will, *please* just let me explain.”

Will's vision reddens as he shakes his head. "How did you know? How...how did you know I was like you? How…"

"Will…"

"Humans that birth our kind still carry with them the scent of the...children...they birth."

"But you said…"

"Your mother only carried yours," Hannibal says, tears falling down his face, "And it drew me to her because it was so strong. Will I knew I wanted you even before I…"

"You wanted me to be an incubator," Will hisses, "Not anything else."

He shakes his head. "No, that's---"

"How long?" Will says, his voice shaking, "How long until they come out?"

"Incubation lasts usually between four to six weeks."

Will smiles. "The grounding," he says, "It wasn't about me at all."

Hannibal growls and rushes for him, grabbing Will's wrist. "YES IT WAS! Will, you've put yourself in *very real* danger!"

He claws at Hannibal's arm. "Let me go!"

"No!" Hannibal growls, pulling him in close as he eyes glow red, "You will *listen* to me."

Will hates how safe he still feels this close to him, and how much he wants to be taken into his arms again. "I hate you so much."

"You can hate me all you like," Hannibal growls, "But you will *listen.* Abigail's father is a very dangerous man. He more than likely saw you shift in front of Beverly and is now actively planning to harm you. His family....they've been hunting us for a very long time. Too long."

Will shakes his head. "I'm stronger than he is."

"You would put our children in danger to prove that?"

Will growls. "Fuck you, I'm not…"

Hannibal grabs his chin and Will watches him struggle not to shift. "Your recklessness will get you killed."

"You can find other incubators," Will whispers.

"If after all we've been through these past weeks that's all you think I see you as...then I suppose there's nothing more I can say."

He lets him go and Will's chest aches as he sees the pain in his eyes before he turns away from him.

"The green one," Will whispers, "Is he…"

"Matthew," Hannibal growls, "You've felt it yourself though you didn't know why."

"What does he want from me?"

"You," he says, looking back at Will, "He doesn't want something *from* you, Will. He wants *you.*"

Will puts both hands on his belly. "But...the…"

"He obviously doesn't care that I've impregnated you. If anything he may destroy the eggs once they're born and plant his seed in their place. There are very real dangers around you, Will. That is why I decided to keep you here in seclusion. Do you believe that?"

He stares down at his belly. "I'm not sure what I believe."

"Please, just...stay safe. That's all I ask."

Will looks up at him again. "When it's over," he whispers, "I'm going home."

Hannibal's face falls. "And the children?"

"I'll take them with me," Will says, his voice shaking, "I...I can't stay here."

"Your father…"

"I think he knows," Will says, "He's...said things."

Hannibal nods. "Yes, I thought the same. Will, I...I will follow you and them wherever you go. Even if you never allow me close. I...I cannot...I will not lose you."

Will wipes the tears from his face as he turns away, and walks to the door. "You already lost me."

He runs out of the kitchen, holding a hand over his mouth, and stops when he sees Leanne in the hall. Her hair is messed up, her eyes wild, and though she frowns at him he can see a smile in her eyes.

"I heard yelling," she says, "Is everything ok?"

He lowers his hand. "No," he whispers, "But...that's what you wanted, right?"

Leanne shakes her head. "Of course not! You're my son, I…"

Will laughs. "Fuck you! Just...stay away from me. After this summer I never want to see you again."

“Will…”

Will goes into his room and locks the door before he crumbles to his knees. The sobs that overtake him seem worse this time and try as he might he can’t stop them. Leanne knocks and he can’t hear a word she says through the door as he clutches his belly.

The weight of everything just seems to fall at once and the exhaustion overtakes him as everything fades.

He wakes up in his bed with the sun beaming into the window and rolls onto his back to stare up at the ceiling.

Hannibal put him to bed, he knows, and the thought shouldn’t make him feel happy but it does.

His feelings will fade, he hopes, with time.

They have to.

Will turns to see a covered tray on his dresser, different from the last, and he gets out of bed to lift it.

There’s eggs, bacon, and sausage underneath.

He eats everything on the plate and drinks the juice before laying down again.

His whole body hurts but he picks up his phone.

Good morning, Sunshine! Still want me to come over?

Please. I need you.

Is everything ok?

Tears fill his eyes as he types.

No.

I’ll be there soon.

Will lets the phone fall to the floor as he closes his eyes tight.

The events of last night seem to wash over him again and he buries his face into the pillow that still smells like Hannibal as he cries. The ache in him seems to worsen as the scent hits him, but he craves it still so much he doesn’t stop.

“Oh god…”

Will suddenly feels his stomach lurch and he rushes out of bed to throw up everything he ate in the bathroom.

He sobs as it all comes out, shaking, and doesn't know how long it's been until he hears Bev's voice. She holds his hair back and rubs the back of his neck.

"Oh no, Will...shhh…"

Will hugs her legs, sobbing, and she pets his head.

"Shhh…"

It feels like he can't breathe, the pain is so much, and his vision blurs before he loses consciousness.

He wakes up in bed, Bev glued to his side, and hugs her tight.

"How did I get here?"

"Hannibal," she says, "He...did something happen with you guys?"

Will nods.

"Something bad?"

He nods.

"Oh Will…you don't have to tell me if you don't want to."

Will lifts his head. "I'm pregnant," he says.

Bev's eyes widen. "Shit."

"And...I shouldn't tell you but...that problem I had...it's not a problem anymore."

She frowns. "With what?"

"The two guys," he says, sniffling, "It's...just one guy."

"I'm confused."

He sighs and sits up, looking out the window. "Hannibal is both guys."

Bev is quiet.

"Oh god, Will…shit, shit...fuck."

She grabs his hand. "So, now I'm a single dad," he laughs, smiling at her, "I'm all alone."

Bev pulls him into a hug and he buries his face into her neck.

"You're not alone, Graham," she whispers, "I got you. I'm here for you and all the tadpoles. Okay?"

“Bev…”

“That asshole lied to you for weeks, and he...he doesn’t deserve you.”

Will closes his eyes. “But I still want him.”

She kisses his forehead. “I know, Will. I know.”

He loses himself in sobs again, and she holds him the whole time.

“I think I’m in love with him,” Will whispers, his voice shaking, “I...I love him.”

She holds him tighter. “Oh Will,” she says, “I know.”

Will feels worse now that he’s let himself say the words.

He loves Hannibal.

He hates Hannibal.

Right now, he’s not sure which one is worse.

Chapter 40

Bev stays till dark with Will, watching horror movies and eating pizza. It's delivery, paid by Bev, who refuses to let Will ask Hannibal for money or even food.

"He was sitting in the living room when I got the pizza watching me," she mumbles, "Creeper."

Will's stomach hurts. "Did he...say anything?"

She frowns. "Will…"

"No, it's...it's fine."

Will eats half the pepperoni pizza before the first movie, Slash Park, is even half over.

"Thank god I got two," she laughs, as Will blushes.

"Sorry."

"It's fine," she says, hugging him, "You're eating for...twelve."

He tries to smile. "Maybe."

"Maybe," she echoes, "We gotta keep the tadpoles fed."

The movie ends with Will still not throwing up, which is the best thing that happened to him today.

Will rubs his belly. "They like pizza apparently."

"See? I knew it was a good idea."

He smiles. "Auntie Bev, always filled with good ideas."

She touches his cheek. "Hey, you're smiling."

Will's lip quivers as he fights to keep the smile. "Yeah, I…"

"Hey, hey!" she says, pulling him into another hug, "I shouldn't have said anything."

"It's ok."

Bev sighs. "You want me to sleep over? I can do guard duty. Keep you-know-who from creepin' in on you."

Will pulls away from her, shaking his head. "No, it's fine. I...thank you for coming over. I really did need it."

“Really, it’s ok! I can stay.”

“You really don’t have to, I’m...fine.”

“Will…”

He puts both hands on his belly. “I’m gonna be ok. We’re gonna be ok.”

Bev hugs him again. “I’m gonna call my parents. Just shut up and let me stay.”

“Bev…”

“It’s not every night your best friend finds out his secret boyfriend is a sea monster who got him pregnant.”

He laughs as tears fall down his cheeks. “No, it’s not.”

“We can finish the pizza, watch some more bad movies, and think of some baby names,” she says, pausing to lift her head, “Oh god, how long do you carry the tadpoles?”

“He said four to six weeks.”

“Shit, that’s fast. It’s been one already, right?”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

Bev stares at Will’s hands. “Does it feel weird? Knowing they’re in there?”

He frowns. “A little.”

“Does your stomach feel any different?”

“Yeah,” he says, “You wanna touch it?”

“I don’t have to, it’s…fine, I…”

Will takes her hands and puts them on his belly. “It really only feels weird in a bad way when I think about...him, or...I’m just away too long.”

She frowns. “Will…”

“It’s ok, really,” he lies, “We’ll be ok.”

“Yeah, you will,” she says, hugging him again, “Cuz I’m here.”

“Bev…”

Bev kisses his cheek. “I love you, you know?”

“I love you too.”

She gets up off the bed, pulling out her phone. “Give me five minutes.”

Will nods as he watches her walk across his bedroom, and suddenly gets hit with the need to pee. He rushes into the bathroom and relieves himself, sighing in relief.

“Now that I know about all of you, you’re just gonna drive me crazy huh?”

The eggs can’t answer but Will still feels they’re there.

And that’s enough for now.

He washes his hands and splashes some water on his face, staring into the mirror.

“We’ll be ok,” he says again, the words still not sinking in.

He sighs as he leaves the bathroom and stops short when he sees who’s in the hallway.

“I’m sorry, I...I was merely bringing you and Beverly some beverages. I was hoping to leave this outside.”

Hannibal is holding a tray with a pitcher of lemonade and two glasses on it. Will takes the tray, their fingers brushing just enough to make him shiver. “Thank you.”

“I’m...glad Beverly is here for you, Will.”

Will’s eyes fill with tears. “So am I.”

They stare at each other for far too long until Bev’s voice breaks through the quiet.

“Hey Will, every---oh.”

“Hello Beverly.”

She glares at him. “Hello, Dr. Lecter.”

“I brought some refreshments.”

Bev takes the tray from Will and grabs his hand. “Thank you. Come on, Will.”

He turns away, his stomach hurting, and goes into his room again. Bev sets the tray down and locks the door, squeezing his hand. “You ok?”

Will nods. “I’m fine.”

“He really needs to back off.”

“He’s just worried about me.”

“Will…”

He feels a tear slide down his cheek. “It’s just hard not to...want to go to him.”

Bev leads him to the bed and lays her head on his shoulder. “I know.”

“Right about now I’d go for a swim, or…”

“Why don’t we?” she asks, making him sniffle.

“What?”

“Go for a swim!” she says, smiling, “You love swimming, and it might make you feel better.”

“Hannibal doesn’t think it’s safe.”

“Why?”

Will looks at her. “He thinks that Abigail’s dad saw me when we...you know.”

Her eyes widen. “What?”

“He was acting really weird when we saw him and her on the boat, and…”

“You saw them?”

“I...yeah. We saw them on the boat yesterday.”

Bev looks away. “How did she look?”

“Scared,” Will says, “Just like she did at the mall.”

She sighs. “Fuck.”

“I’m sorry I…”

Bev shakes her head. “No, it’s fine. You’ve had a lot of shit happen since then. I just...I miss even just texting her, you know?”

Will pulls her in with one arm. “I know.”

“This summer finally gives me a love life and it’s a shit one,” she laughs.

“Me too.”

“No one can beat yours.”

He puts a hand on his belly. “Probably not.”

“You still want to go swimming?”

Will looks at the window. “It’s probably not safe,” he sighs, “Mr. Hobbs isn’t the only danger. There’s someone in the water.”

Bev lifts her head. “What? Another one?”

“Remember the water snake?”

She pauses. “What?”

“At your house,” he says, shivering at the memory as he rubs his arms, “That...it was Matt.”

Bev is quiet and he looks up at her. “Shit. Will...shit.”

“Yeah,” he says, touching his neck, “He’s dangerous. Hannibal thinks he wants me for himself. That he might...hurt the tadpoles.”

“Okay, so...no swimming.”

He frowns. “If you wanna go home…”

“No, no!” she says, “We...we can…”

Will falls back on the bed with a sigh. “Sit here and be depressed?”

“No, no, we...um…this is the time when you realize you should’ve asked your sugar monster for a PS5.”

He laughs, covering his face. “Bev!”

She falls onto the bed and rolls into the crook of his arm. “I’m just saying! A PS5 would distract us.”

They both stare up at the ceiling for far too long before they speak again.

“He’d probably get me one, if I asked.”

“Probably, but...do you want to ask?”

Will puts a hand on his belly. “No.”

“We can think of some names?”

“For the tadpoles?”

“I mean you’re gonna be a dad in a couple of weeks. You should probably think of something.”

“Cthulhu?”

She giggles into his shoulder. “Will!”

“You asked!”

They both laugh. “C’mon, be serious.”

Will sighs. “Maybe Michael? After my dad.”

“That’s nice. I like that. How about a girl?”

He rubs his belly. “Ariel?”

Bev grins. “Like the Little Mermaid?”

“Hey, I think it’s pretty!”

She rolls onto her side. “It is pretty, it’s just...the Little Mermaid?”

Will blushes. “You asked.”

“Okay. Michael, Ariel…”

“What about Beverly?”

Bev’s lip suddenly quivers. “Will…”

He smiles as his eyes fill with tears. “You’ve been here for me more than anyone else, and...yeah. Beverly.”

She throws herself across Will’s chest and wraps her arms around him. “Little Beverly.”

Will hugs her back. “I think that’s...enough names for tonight.”

He sniffles as Bev nods against his chest.

“Maybe we need to just go to sleep. It’s past nine.”

Bev lifts her head. “Bored of me already?”

“No, I just...it’s been a long twenty four hours.”

She nods and gets up to go to his dresser. “I’m gonna grab some of your boxers and I’ll be back. Just...dress down and get under the covers.”

Will smiles. “Ok.”

Will still aches as he pulls off his shirt, and leaves on only his boxer shorts before slipping under the sheets. His body suddenly feels so tired as he puts on Cannibal Carnival, and he’s got his eyes half open when he sees the door open slightly in his periphery. “I picked something stupid but there’s lots of death.”

Bev doesn’t say anything and he looks up to see no one at the door.

He frowns.

Had Hannibal been watching him?

Will shakes his head.

He can’t think about him now.

Not now.

Bev comes in fast and locks the door behind her, flopping onto Will’s bed. “What’d I miss?”

“Not much,” he jokes, pushing down any thoughts of Hannibal, “Just...people dying and cotton candy.”

“Damn.”

Will smiles. “Want me to rewind it?”

“Nah, it’s ok.”

She climbs in beside him and they giggle for a few minutes about the stupidity of the movie until Bev just stops talking all together. He turns his head to see her sound asleep.

Will suddenly feels the pain he’s held back the last several hours overwhelm him and he closes his eyes, everything turning red even in the dark, and his vision blurring. He puts a hand on his belly and pushes down just a little, hoping for a response.

Nothing comes.

Please...

He covers his mouth as the tears seem unable to stop, and turns away from Bev just as a flutter across his hand makes him pause.

“Oh.”

The flutter suddenly becomes many, and he lets out a laugh.

“Will?”

Will turns to see Bev looking at him sleepily. He takes her hand and her eyes widen.

“Feel them?”

“Will…”

“They knew I needed to feel them. I....they can hear me.”

Bev smiles and pulls him into a hug. “Will, it’s...fuck, you’re amazing.”

Will buries his face against her neck.

“No, I’m not.”

“Yeah, you are,” she whispers, “You...you got this.”

He closes his eyes and tries not to wish it wasn't Hannibal hugging him.

"I got this," he whispers, as tears fall down his cheeks, "I can do this."

They pull apart and laugh again. Bev puts her head on Will's belly. "Hello tadpoles," she whispers, "You hear me?"

The flutter stops and Will frowns. "I…"

"Maybe I was too loud?"

He looks down at his stomach, and pats it lightly. "I think...I got bigger."

"That's not possible."

"And being a pregnant sea monster is?"

She smiles. "You got me there."

Will closes his eyes.

We'll be ok.

The eggs flutter against his skin in response and he smiles, opening his eyes. "I think they just can hear me."

Bev grins. "Maybe it's a sea monster thing. Or a daddy thing?"

Will's face falls. "Yeah."

"Will…"

He lays back down and she does the same, still frowning. "It's ok."

Bev lays her head on his shoulder. "What are you gonna tell everyone when you start to get *too* big?"

He closes his eyes, keeping one hand on his belly. "I'll figure it out."

The last thing he feels as he falls asleep is the eggs move again, a very excited flutter that makes him feel warm all over.

It reminds him of Hannibal.

Will doesn't hear the tv go off after that, the door close, or the turn of a key.

In fact, he doesn't hear anything at all.

Chapter 41

Will wakes up the next morning when Bev nearly shouts outside his door.

“Oh my god, seriously?”

He rubs his eyes and sees her in the doorway, still clad in her own shirt with his boxers.

“What’s wrong?”

She turns around and he blinks.

There’s a PS5 in her hands.

“Somebody is trying to buy you off,” she scoffs, setting it on the dresser, “Though he’s doin’ a pretty good job.”

Will stares at the box. “He was listening at the door?”

“Apparently,” she laughs, “Can you whisper that you want a Lamborghini next?”

He puts a hand on his belly. “I’ll tell him to take it back.”

“What?” she says, shaking her head, “No way! No one can get one of these even a year after they came out. You’re keeping it. It’s the least he can do. Though you’ll need more games than what’s in this one? Spider-Man?”

He laid back on his bed and watched her look at the box. “I don’t want it, Bev.”

“Yes, you do,” she says, frowning, “Just give it a few days.”

“I could give it a few years and I still don’t think I’ll be over this.”

Bev walks over and sits on his bed. “I’m sorry.”

“I know.”

She puts a hand on his belly. “It’s bigger.”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

“You won’t be able to hide it for long.”

“I guess I have to go shopping for bigger clothes.”

Bev frowns. “With who?”

He smiles. “You think he wants me out of the house by myself?”

“Will…”

Will takes her hand. “I’m fine, Bev. You can go home, ok? Just...don’t leave me here alone for long.”

She sighs. “Okay. I’m gonna go put my shorts back on.”

He nods.

Will rolls away, hands on his stomach again, and feels the eggs move. He smiles. “Good morning.”

The idea that he might be carrying seven to twelve little beings inside him should be more frightening. He knows that. But the longer he knows about the eggs, and can feel them, the happier he is.

“Will?”

He turns to see her fully dressed tossing his boxers in the hamper. “You gonna stay for whatever breakfast Hannibal is gonna make?”

“You want me to?”

“Only if---”

She leans down and touches his face, reminding Will instantly of Hannibal doing the same. “Do you want me to stay?”

“Yes.”

Bev smiles. “Okay, then you’d better get dressed.”

“If I can find clothes that fit.”

She goes to his drawer, pulls out a few pairs of shorts with elastic waists, and tosses them on the dresser over the ps5. “There. I will now pester the father of your tadpoles and leave you to it.”

“Bev…”

Bev points back at him in the doorway. “Get dressed.”

He shuts the door behind her, hurries himself into the shorts, and grabs the closest t-shirt before heading out after her.

She’s not even at the dining room door when he gets there and the smell of food makes his stomach rumble. He licks his lips as they open the door.

Hannibal is sitting at the head of the table like always and Leanne is beside him looking better than Will’s seen in weeks.

“Good morning,” Bev says, sitting to Hannibal’s right while Will sits by her.

Hannibal looks sad, his skin a light blue, and even his clothes are a bit messed.

Will’s chest hurts just looking at him so he looks away.

“Good morning,” he says, making Will feel worse, “Did you both sleep well?”

“Yep!” Bev says, “All that pizza did Will’s stomach good. It seems to be the one thing he can keep down.”

“I’ll...take that under advisement.”

“You’re still feeling sick, honey?” Leanne asks, sounding concerned.

“Not this morning,” Bev answers, as Will watches her take some sausage from the plate on the table, “He’s pretty good, right?”

He nods.

“Well I’m feeling just fabulous,” Leanne says, “I probably don’t even have to go in for an exam anymore. I’m really---”

“How are you today, Dr. Lecter?” Bev asks, “Sleep well?”

“Not especially, no. My sleep was...fitful.”

“Bummer,” she says, grabbing another plate, “Here Will.”

She puts some eggs on his plate, and then some sausage. Will sticks his fork in the latter, barely chewing, and rubs at his belly with his other hand. The eggs move under his hand and he smiles.

Good morning to you too.

“What are you gonna do today, honey? I know Hannibal has you inside but---”

“He’s probably just gonna play on his new Playstation 5,” Bev says, “Lucky.”

Leanne is quiet and Will looks up to see her staring at Hannibal. “Where did that come from?”

“I obtained the machine last night.”

“Those are...expensive.”

“It was a gift, Leanne. I am allowed to spend my money any way I please.”

“When’s the last time you spent five hundred dollars on me?”

“You have plenty of expensive handbags.”

“Hanni…”

Hannibal bangs his hand on the table. “ENOUGH!”

Will can’t help but turn and look at him again. Hannibal seems to be fighting to stay human, and Will’s eyes fill with tears as he watches him struggle.

He hates him, he does, but the love is still so strong he can’t stand to see him so upset.

Suddenly Leanne rises from the table, holding her mouth, and runs into the kitchen. The sound of her vomiting is hard to miss, and Hannibal’s face brightens as he looks at Will.

“Will…”

“Go put water on your face,” he whispers, staring down at his food again, “You’re showing.”

He hears Hannibal leave, and Bev puts her hand on his arm. “You ok? That was...weird.”

“I hate her so much.”

“I know.”

“I hate him too, but…”

Bev wraps her arm around him. “You love him.”

Will doesn’t say anything.

The sound of Leanne’s vomiting ceases and Will rushes through his food, hoping to miss her return.

“Hey, hey…”

He freezes as the door opens. “Well...wishful thinking,” she says, sighing, “I think I need to lie down.”

Will’s teeth feel heavy in his mouth as she passes them by, and Bev turns his cheek.

“Shit, you’re...showing too.”

He closes his eyes, letting out a long breath, and when he opens them again Bev is smiling.

“Good to go.”

“I wish you didn’t have to go.”

“Want me to go home to get some clothes and come back? My parents won’t mind.”

Will shakes his head. “No, it’s...fine.”

“I can come on your shopping trip.”

He smiles as he eats the last bit of his eggs. “I can’t make you move in with me.”

“I don’t want to leave you alone in this...place...by yourself.”

Will rubs his belly. “I’m not by myself, and Hannibal is here. He’s not gonna let anything bad happen to me, not after all the trouble he went to in order to…”

His lip quivers and he holds in tears.

“Will..”

“Just go home, Bev. Okay? Maybe you can come back tomorrow. We can play something.”

She hugs him from behind. “Okay,” she rubs her hands on his belly, “Take care of him for me, tadpoles.”

Will laughs. “They will.”

The two of them leave the dining room and he walks her to the door.

The house already feels worse knowing she’s gonna leave, but he doesn’t want to make her stay.

“I’ll call you later,” she says, “We can skype something.”

Will forces himself to smile. “Okay.”

Bev frowns. “It’s gonna be okay, Will.”

“I know.”

She pulls him in for another hug again, and kisses his cheek. “Kick his ass for me.”

He laughs and watches her walk away from the house, his eyes never leaving her until it’s too far for him to see.

Will’s phone vibrates as he’s walking back to his bedroom with a message.

You got this.

I know.

He smiles as he rereads the words, and doesn’t look up when he turns into his room.

“You haven’t opened it yet.”

Will freezes.

Hannibal is sitting on his bed.

“I wanted to tell you to take it back,” he whispers, “But Bev talked me out of it.”

“I see.”

“Why are you in my room?”

“I thought we could talk.”

Will walks by him and stands at the window looking out at the water. “I don’t want to talk to you.”

“I know.”

“Then why…”

“You’re getting bigger by the hour,” Hannibal says, making Will close his eyes, “You may need new clothing to...hide that.”

“I know.”

“I could take you and Beverly to go shopping, and linger in the background. You’d never even have to know I was there.”

Will laughs as tears fill his eyes. “Like I wouldn’t know you were there.”

“Will…”

“Just give me your credit card and I’ll buy shit online, I don’t care.”

Hannibal is quiet. “Alright, if that’s what you want.”

He turns to glare at him. “What I want is to never have even met you,” he hisses, his vision turning red, “What I want...I can’t have...so...this is what I have.”

“Will…”

Will looks away, wiping his face. “Where is she?”

“Resting,” Hannibal says softly, “She’s feeling unwell again. I was going to take her for an examination this afternoon to give you some time to yourself.”

“You’re not worried someone might break in to snatch me? Your prize?”

“I...hadn’t thought of that.”

Will laughs. “I was joking.”

“It’s a possibility.”

He turns around again. “Maybe I’d be better off at home.”

“Our...your...offspring...need the presence of both their parents to grow,” Hannibal says, “And I am not saying that just to keep you connected to me. You yourself know you feel

much better in my presence."

Will rubs his belly. "Yes."

"So until you expel them, this is the best place for all of you. I will prepare the birthing space, and the hatching areas in time."

He blinks. "Hatching?"

"They're eggs, Will," Hannibal says, "They'll need to hatch."

Will stares down at his stomach. "Just how big am I gonna get?"

"Not as large as you're picturing. I imagine about the size of an average pregnant human at nine months."

He looks up. "But…"

"You'll expel the eggs, place them in a harvesting area, and they will grow to fullness."

Will feels the eggs move under his hand. "And I'll protect them until then."

"Yes," Hannibal says, "I know you will."

The sadness in Hannibal's eyes makes Will look away again.

"How close do you need to be?"

"Do you feel I'm close enough now?"

He closes his eyes as his lip quivers. "No."

"Then perhaps…"

Will knows he should say something, anything, but as he senses Hannibal get closer he doesn't even breathe. He doesn't touch him, though Will resists leaning back into him, and the feel of breath on the back of his neck makes him shiver.

"Is this?"

He wants to say 'No' again.

But he doesn't.

"Yes."

Hannibal doesn't move, and Will can't bring himself to look at him.

"Will, there's something...I believe is happening that I need to tell you."

He sighs. "Do I have to sit down for this?"

“Perhaps, it’s best.”

Will turns, not looking his way, and sits on the bed. Hannibal walks to the door and closes it before he stops short of sitting down beside him.

“What?”

“Leanne,” he says, “Her sickness, it’s…”

“You told me already,” Will mumbles, “That it’s because she’s old or something.”

Hannibal moves to lean against the dresser. “Your mother is going through menopause, yes,” he says, staring down at his hands, “But.. I....did things to help keep her sedated.”

Will frowns. “You told me you gave her stuff to calm her down. I know that already.”

“Not just drugs,” he says, looking up, “And not just to her.”

He feels his chest tighten. “You gave me stuff?”

“No, no,” he says, rushing to kneel by the bed, “I have abilities that I’ve not disclosed to you before and…”

“You made me fall asleep,” Will says, his voice shaking, “Why?”

“Only once,” he says, “I promise you. You needed it, and I...regretted it immediately.”

Will’s teeth feel heavy in his mouth as the tears fill his eyes again. “So you lied to me, you mind controlled me, you knocked me up, and...what else?”

“Will…”

“You said something was happening, Hannibal, what’s happening?”

“I believe that your abilities have been affecting Leanne as well,” he whispers, “I think you’ve reacted quite a few times to the perceived threat of her and...contributed.”

Will blinks. “What?”

“I’m not certain,” he says, almost reaching for Will’s hands but stopping himself, “But today when Leanne was upsetting me I think the resurge of her sickness was you. I think her descent into madness and delusion may have also been caused by you.”

He puts a hand on his belly. “You’re lying.”

“You’ve told me on more than one occasion that you wish she were dead, Will.”

“That doesn’t mean I want to kill her! That…”

Hannibal’s skin shifted and Will felt heat fill him seeing his blue skin. “No,” he says, “I don’t believe you want to kill her, not directly. But you protected me today and that...it gave me

hope.”

Will feels a tear go down his cheek. “Don’t.”

“I love you, Will,” he says, “I will not push you, or force you to me again. But I know you care for me, and that my betrayal will be hard to surpass. Which is why I will never keep anything from you again.”

“I hate you,” Will hisses, “I...I...I don’t…”

Hannibal smiles as he stands with tears in his eyes. “I know you want to hurt me,” he whispers, “And I deserve your wrath. But we’re meant for each other, Mielasis. I know it, and so do you.”

Will looks up at him. “If I could hurt her,” he whispers, “I could hurt you.”

“Yes, you can.”

His whole body aches as he feels coldness fill him, but as the tears blur his vision he crumbles letting out a sob.

“Will…”

“Go,” he says, “Just...just go.”

Hannibal leaves without a word and he rolls onto his side as tears fall down his face.

Will didn't know it was possible to love someone so much you hated them.

But now he does.

He puts two hands on his belly and closes his eyes.

I’m sorry.

I'm so sorry.

Chapter 42

Will doesn't sleep.

But he doesn't move either.

The emotional exhaustion of the last few days has his whole body aching but he resists and just stares out the window. He so badly wants to go into the water and knows Hannibal wouldn't stop him, but he can't bring himself to even leave the room.

Time seems to stop as he just exists, the sadness seeping out of his every pore, and when Hannibal knocks on his door he's so tired he doesn't even answer. But he can feel Hannibal come into the room.

"Will?"

"What?"

"I've woken Leanne," Hannibal says, "We're going to my office for the rest of the afternoon. If anything happens please don't hesitate to call."

He doesn't look at him. "Fine."

"Will…"

"Just go."

"I've left you something to eat in the refrigerator. Please eat. If not for me or yourself...eat for them."

Will feels the eggs flutter inside him and he closes his eyes. "Fine."

"Thank you."

Hannibal leaves and Will waits until he hears the car pull away before he goes into the hall. The house feels almost worse with just him inside, but he tells himself he's glad Hannibal is gone.

It's better he's not here.

There's a large round covered dish in the fridge and a note.

For your stomach - H

He lifts the cover and tears fill his eyes.

It's sausage pizza.

Will's lip quivers as the tears come, and he takes two pieces warming them up in the microwave.

"Fuck," he whispers, rubbing his belly, "He really never stops, does he?"

Will takes the pizza back to his room and turns on something bland barely watching as he eats. The pizza is, of course, amazing and he goes back for two more pieces. The movie he put on ends with the last piece and he sets the plate on his bedside table lying down again.

He presses on his stomach to feel the eggs flutter and smiles through sudden tears.

"Hi there," he whispers, "You just keep moving, huh?"

The eggs seem to hear him and he lets out a sob. "You guys wanna get wet with me?"

They don't move or protest so he pulls himself out of bed to the bathroom to start a bath climbing in even before the water is halfway. The water feels perfect on his skin and he leans back letting his shift go.

"That's good, huh?"

He closes his eyes and leans back as the tub fills. This is as close as he's gonna get to the lake for now.

Will turns off the water when it starts to get too high and doesn't bother adding in any soap. He sighs as he submerges himself under the water and though there's not room to let his tail and fin out it's better than moping in bed.

He feels the eggs flutter in his belly and knows they can feel it too.

Babies' first swim.

Will smiles as he lets the worry fade and he doesn't realize he's fallen asleep until the doorbell wakes him.

He startles, splashing water all over, and stares around in surprise.

"That's new," he laughs, getting up out of the tub.

Will pulls on his clothes before he runs to the door, opening it without checking the peephole.

He freezes when he sees who's on the other side of the screen door and locks it.

Matt Brown's smiling face makes his skin crawl.

"Will," he says, "I didn't know you lived here."

"Yes, you did."

Matt licks his lips. "Maybe I did, but...I came to ask…" he holds up a paper for Will to see.

LOST DOG

Will's chest hurts.

"Seaweed?"

"The little guy got out of my truck at a job and took off. If you see him, can you let me know? I'll leave the paper in your mailbox."

Will frowns. "Okay."

He turns to go and looks back one more time to wink. "Nice seeing you, Will."

He closes the door and locks it twice, leaning against the wood as he tries to calm down.

Matt knows where he lives.

It's not that big of a deal.

Will's stomach growls but he finds nothing good in the pantry so he goes back to his room. He sits down and picks up his phone.

Four missed calls.

All from Bev.

He frowns and calls her back.

"Bev?"

"Will! Where have you been? I've been calling all day!"

"Sorry I…"

"I really needed you," Bev says, her voice shaking, "I…"

"What's wrong?"

"It's Abby," she sighs, "I saw her and her Dad at the store again. I saw bruises on her arms and...Will, she looked so scared."

"Bev…"

The sound of Hannibal's car returning makes Will look outside in time to see Leanne head for the house with Hannibal lingering behind.

"I don't know what to do, Will. My parents said I was probably just seeing things but she really looked scared."

"You can't call anyone? DCFS?"

She scoffs. “I’m sure I’m not the first person to tell them Mr. Hobbs is a monster.”

“I…”

There’s a knock at his door and he looks up as Hannibal peeks his head in carrying a piece of paper. “Bev, I hate to let you go but…”

She sighs. “It’s fine, Will. I just needed to vent.”

“You wanna come over tomorrow? Maybe we can play something?”

“Maybe. “

“It’ll be ok, Bev. I...I’m sure it’ll be ok.”

“You don’t know that, Will. You really don’t.”

“Bev, I…”

“Goodnight, Will.”

She ends the call and he stares at his phone.

“Is Beverly alright?”

Will sighs and sets his phone down. “It’s about Abigail Hobbs. Bev saw bruises on her like I did.”

“I see.”

“You said you could do something about Hobbs,” he says, glaring at him, “And you haven’t.”

“He’s dangerous, Will.”

“I know that,” Will hisses, “And…”

Hannibal throws down the paper in his hand.

It’s Matt’s lost dog poster. “Why was this in our mailbox?”

Will stares at Seaweed’s picture. “He came by to ask if I’d seen the dog.”

“You let him inside?”

“No,” Will laughs, “I’m not an idiot. I just said I’d call if I saw Seaweed.”

“Will…”

He grabs the paper and crumbles it up, tossing the paper across the room.

“You don’t get to tell me what to do anymore,” he growls, his teeth heavy in his mouth, “I can take care of myself.”

Hannibal’s eyes glow red as they glare at each other. “I hope that’s true.”

“Just go back to your girlfriend.”

“Will…”

“How did that go, by the way? Did you make something up to explain why she’s so sick or did you tell her your stupid theory that I did it?”

“No,” Hannibal says, “I tried to explain to her that she’s going through menopause again but she’s convinced she’s…”

“What?”

Hannibal frowns. “Expecting.”

Will’s lip curls. “Seriously?”

“Yes.”

“It would just kill her to know I am and she isn’t,” he says, feeling an odd satisfaction.

“Yes, it would.”

“Where is she? Sleeping?”

“She’s watching television in the living room. I declined to join her.”

Will puts a hand on his belly. “I guess I’ll go to bed hungry then.”

“I can get you something, if you’d like.”

He sighs and forces himself to stand. “It’s fine, I can go.”

“Will…”

Will ignores him and tries to get out the door but Hannibal grabs his arm. “What?”

“Please stay away from Matthew,” he says, “Promise me.”

He yanks his hand back. “No, I’m not promising you anything.”

“Will!”

Will runs down the hall, hoping Leanne doesn’t notice him, but as soon as he turns toward the kitchen she calls out.

“Honey! Wait!”

He sighs and turns around. “What?”

Leanne’s smile is almost too wide and she’s got a hand on her belly.

Will has to resist growling.

“I have news!”

“I told you, I didn’t want to talk to you again. I….”

She frowns. “When did you say that?”

Will blinks at her. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

“Honey, I really think that there’s something wrong with you. The past few days you’ve been holding yourself up in your room and you’re so angry. Maybe it’s a bad time to tell you but Hannibal and I...are having a baby.”

Will bursts out laughing.

“Oh my god,” he laughs, holding his stomach, “I...I can’t!”

“Will, what’s so funny? I don’t find this funny at all!”

He feels tears stream down his face as he still giggles and points at her. “You’re a joke! You...you honestly think...oh god you’re a joke!”

Leanne glares at him. “Stop it right now! RIGHT NOW!”

He rushes up to her, his vision half red, and shakes his head. “Make me.”

“I…I will! You…”

She reaches out to hit him but stops as her skin suddenly turns pale.

Will feels the cold enter him as he stares at her, and she rushes out of the room holding her mouth. He can hear the sound of her being sick in the bathroom and know he did that.

Hannibal was right.

His momentary happiness is gone when he suddenly stumbles, almost falling, and Hannibal is there to catch him. “Wha...t?”

“You’ve weakened yourself. May I?”

Will feels his vision fade as Hannibal lifts him without permission and when he wakes again he’s in his room with Hannibal by his side.

“How long?”

“A few hours.”

“I...I didn’t get anything to eat.”

“I’ve brought you a sandwich,” Hannibal whispers, wiping his forehead with a cold cloth, “You...were very weak.”

“I feel weak,” Will whispers, his voice hoarse, “If I’ve been doing it this whole time why…”

“There’s different degrees of power,” Hannibal says, “Anger is not a good motivator for us.”

Will scoffs. “I guess not.”

“She was very sick,” Hannibal says, “You succeeded greatly.”

He smiles. “Well, that’s something.”

Hannibal smiles. “It’s nice to see you smile.”

Will looks away. “Can you hand me the sandwich?”

“Of course.”

He gets up from Will’s bed and grabs the plate. “It’s peanut butter and strawberry.”

Will refuses to cry in front of him so he holds back. “Thank you.”

“I apologize for...not believing you can take care of yourself.”

“It’s fine.”

“No, it’s not,” Hannibal says, grabbing his arm, “I...I know you’re strong, Will. That’s one of the many reasons why I love you.”

Will shakes his head. “Don’t.”

“Will…”

“I’m fine now,” he whispers, “You can go.”

‘Will, promise me that you’ll tell me if something happens with Garrett or Matthew.”

He sighs. “I will.”

“I will look into Mr. Hobbs,” Hannibal whispers, “His daughter deserves it at the very least, and I wouldn’t want Beverly to get involved any deeper than she already has.”

“Sure.”

Will takes a bite of his sandwich and hates how good it tastes.

“Goodnight, Will.”

He turns away from the door as tears fall down his face.

“I love you.”

Will closes his eyes.

I love you too.

He does.

He really does.

Chapter 43

Will wakes up the next morning thirstier than he's been his entire life. He rushes to the bathroom and starts to suck down water in his cupped hands before shoving his face under the faucet, swallowing all he can until he's ready to choke. The cool water fills him and he relaxes after what feels like forever, leaning against the sink as he tries to calm down.

"What the fuck?" he gasps, wiping water from his mouth.

He doesn't bother putting on his clothes and finds Hannibal in the kitchen already.

"What the fuck is going on?" Will growls, startling him.

"Will, what is it?"

Will opens his mouth to speak but suddenly the thirst is there again.

He grabs a mug on the drying rack and fills it up with water only to need to refill again as he guzzles down all he can take. His stomach hurts as he swallows but he can't seem to stop until Hannibal grabs him from behind pulling him away.

"Will….*breathe*."

Will lets out a shaky breath as water drips off his chin, and his voice shakes as he whispers.

"What...is...wrong...with...me?"

Hannibal puts his hand against Will's forehead and doesn't let him go. "You're burning up," he whispers, "How does your stomach feel?"

"Hurts," Will hisses, seeing red, "I...I need…"

"Water," Hannibal says, "You need water."

"The bath?"

He turns Will in his arms and sighs. "The lake is best. I had thought perhaps keeping you hydrated and having regular showers would be enough but…"

Will knows he should pull away from him but can't bring himself to move. "I...I feel like I might pass out."

Hannibal lifts him up into his arms, turns off the stove, and heads for the front door.

"You need to swim," he growls, "I...I've been negligent and selfish."

"H...annibal?"

He sets Will down on the ground and takes off everything but his boxers. “I know you don’t want me to touch you, but...this can’t wait.”

“H…”

Hannibal takes off everything but his briefs and lifts Will up again as he sets their things in the boat. “Leanne does not need to see our clothes sitting in the grass.”

Will laughs, his voice shaky. “You...should...it…”

Hannibal smiles as stares into Will’s eyes, wiping the sweat from his brow. “You’re delirious,” he whispers, “But...it’s nice to know you still trust me.”

He’s confused but smiles anyway as Hannibal takes them into the water, and once he’s under his whole body shudders as the coolness hits his skin.

Tell me next time, ok?

The eggs flutter under his hand as he looks over at Hannibal, fully shifted now, and his body heats remembering the last time they were here together.

He knows he should just go inside now since this small dip underwater makes him feel loads better already.

But he doesn’t.

Can you hear me?

Hannibal doesn’t move.

Yes.

Swim?

Hannibal grabs Will’s hand. ***Stay close.***

Will hates how good this feels.

Ok.

They take off fast, the water flowing through their bodies as they move, and Will closes his eyes.

He’s missed this so much even though it’s only been a few days.

He hums that same song that Hannibal seems to know, and his body feels warm in the wrong kind of way. Will stops and Hannibal does the same.

Will?

Will resurfaces, shivering as his human form returns quickly. Hannibal is frowning when he comes up after him. “What’s wrong?”

“That song,” he whispers, “What is that song? I...I feel like I know and you know it, and…”

“Will…”

“You said you’d tell me everything.”

Hannibal looks back at the house. “We can still be seen from the house.”

“Hannibal….”

“The cave,” he says, nodding to Will, “We’ll go to the cave.”

Will freezes. “We---”

“It’s safe there,” Hannibal says, “And as I suspect you’ll be angry with me it’s a better place to scream.”

Will sighs. “Fine.”

He holds out his hand again.

“I can swim on my own.”

“All it takes is one hook, one claw, or one hand to take you off to parts unknown. Will you risk that because of stubbornness?”

Will grabs his hand hard. “It’s not just stubbornness,” he mumbles, “It’s anger too.”

“I know,” Hannibal says softly, squeezing his hand, “Ready?”

He nods and together they go under once more, swimming for the cave that Will thought he’d never enter again. The water seems to seep into Will’s skin as they swim this time, and the comfort he gets from touching Hannibal makes him angry. He wants to let go before they get there but doesn’t, latching onto the excuse, and when they finally do at the cave’s entrance he feels the loss but doesn’t hesitate to go first.

Will resurfaces immediately and feels his tail sliding through the water as he waits.

The cave looks exactly the same, why wouldn’t it, but it feels very different. He doesn’t feel quite as happy to see the light coming off the rocks, and what once felt like a secret spot for only him and the blue fin creature now feels like a trap Hannibal set for him.

But that doesn’t stop him from heading for the rocks, and when he leans on them he still remembers things he shouldn’t want to re-experience.

He hears Hannibal resurface but doesn’t look at him.

“It’s still so warm in here,” he whispers, “Almost too warm.”

“Will…”

“You said you wanted to be honest with me,” Will whispers, hating the tears that come to his eyes, “Be honest with me.”

“The song,” Hannibal says, humming now, “It’s...a mating call.”

He smiles, wiping at his eyes. “Of course it is. Did you do some sort of magic monster mating ritual to get me in bed?”

“Will…”

“And that’s why I was so fucking stupid to not even question your BLUE skin and red fucking eyes even before…”

Hannibal swims over to the rocks and Will still won’t look at him, can’t bring himself to, and it almost feels worse.

“Do you remember when you first heard me hum it?”

“Yes.”

“Did it cloud your mind? Make you care for me?”

Will puts a hand on his belly and closes his eyes. “No, it...I liked it. I wanted to hear it again.”

“Will…”

“I sang it to you, when we...did that...is that why I’m…?”

“No, Will, no. It’s a song of mating not for...breeding. I promise you it’s…”

Will opens his eyes and his voice shakes as he looks at him. “A love song.”

Hannibal hasn’t shifted and Will almost misses his other form. His blue fin creature.

“Will…”

“Everybody sings it when they…?”

“My parents did, often, which made for strange times as a young man when you knew why.”

Will can’t help but smile. “I’m sure.”

“I feel perhaps it feels different for everyone, this song. It can make you feel good, or it can make you feel…”

“Horny?” Will laughs.

Hannibal smiles. “Perhaps.”

Will wipes at his face, feeling the scales on his cheeks, and blushes. “I didn’t realize I’d shifted.”

“You look beautiful,” Hannibal says, “In all forms.”

He looks away. “My eyes aren’t red.”

“It doesn’t always happen, does it?”

“Usually.”

“Perhaps you just feel safe here.”

Will looks at him again. “Is there anything else you’ve held back? Anything at all?”

Hannibal sighs. “I…”

“Hannibal, tell me.”

“Your cellular phone,” he sighs, “I...I had the men at the store place a program on it to monitor your activities.”

Will blinks. “What?”

“I was merely...I wanted...Will…”

He laughs. “Fuck! You...oh god are you still watching?”

“No!” Hannibal yells, rushing to grab his arm, “I stopped after I showed you my true self. Will…”

“WHY? Why did you...fuck...I can’t…”

“Will, *please*. I thought it was best for your safety, and…”

“And for you,” Will hisses, his vision turning red, “You thought it was best *for you*. You stalked me even before I came here and I thought it was cute! I thought...fuck! LET ME GO!”

“NO!”

He grabs Will in close and hugs him.

Will closes his eyes.

“Has there ever been anything that you wanted so badly you’d burn your entire life down to get it?”

‘You,’ Will wants to say, but shakes his head.

“*No*,” he lies, whimpering as tears blur his vision, “Not like this, not like…”

Hannibal pulls back and stares into Will's eyes. "The minute I caught your scent from her I knew you were mine. I knew. I cared very little for your feelings, and...I'm sorry, Will. I'm so, so sorry. I...you have no idea how…"

Will shook his head. "You can't just apologize and think everything's gonna be ok."

"I know, Mielaiss, I…"

"Don't," Will whispers, "Just *don't*."

He reaches out and puts two hands on Will's face. Will lets out a sob when he realizes.

"Oh god, you...you did that when you were...I was so stupid."

"No, Will," Hanibal says, pressing their foreheads together, "I was."

They leaned against the rocks in silence for what felt like an eternity before Will spoke.

"We have to go back."

"I know, Will, I...I know. I just....I wish...we didn't have to. I know that once we're out of the water you won't let me touch you like this again."

Will closes his eyes as tears fall down his face. "Hannibal, I...I don't…"

"Tell me to stop, and I will," Hannibal whispers, still touching his cheeks, "I will."

'Don't stop,' Will wants to say.

'Never let me go.'

'Kiss me.'

But instead he whispers the opposite.

"Stop."

Hannibal lets go of him, swimming away, and when Will looks again his eyes are glowing red.

"Why aren't you shifting here?" he asks, "No one can see."

"The last time I was your monster here, Will, I hadn't broken us apart. I will not be him again until I've regained your trust and...heard you tell me you love me."

Will looks away.

"You might have to wait a long time."

Hannibal takes his hand. "I'm learning to be a patient monster."

He sighs and squeezes Hannibal's hand before letting go. "Let's get out of here."

"As you wish."

Hannibal disappears under the water and Will looks back at the cave. He feels like he could stay here forever, and when he touches his belly the eggs flutter in response.

"We'll come back," he says, "I promise."

Will goes under then, hating to leave, and when he comes out Hannibal is there waiting. They take hands again and Will can't help but squeeze as they swim toward the house.

This won't be their last swim together, Will knows that, but still he wishes it could go on forever.

They resurface on the other side of the dock so Leanne can't see, and Will drinks in the sight of Hannibal wet all over as he steps onto land. He feels his backside ache just looking at him, and blushes.

"We'll have to go into the lake several times a week."

"That's fine," Will says, "I missed it like crazy anyway."

"I know."

He looks at him. "You know?"

"You love to swim, Will," he says, smiling, "Even before...everything...you were always in the water."

Will looks out at the water. "You should've told me."

"I know."

He sighs. "Should we even bother getting dressed?"

Hannibal pauses and he watches his eyes narrow for a moment before he shakes his head.

"She's still asleep."

"You can hear?"

"I have a heightened sense of smell and hearing," he admits, walking toward the house, "I do believe all of us have some sort of ability."

"You can smell and hear things from far away and I can hurt people. Great."

"Will…"

He walks into the house still dripping wet, heading for the bathroom to get a towel, and isn't surprised when Hannibal joins him.

“Drying off?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, reaching for a towel, “Will…about your ability…”

“Don’t, ok? Just...don’t. I’m fine.”

He frowns.

“I have others,” Hannibal says, “Other abilities.”

“Such as?”

“I can put people into sleep if I’m touching them,” Hannibal says, wiping his hair, “And I...am quite strong.”

Will smiles. “You’re only a few steps away from supervillain. All you need is a good name.”

“I can’t be a superhero?”

“You know you can’t,” Will whispers, his stomach hurting, “But villains aren’t all bad.”

“Let me know when you find a name for me.”

Will looks away. “I will.”

They dry off and get redressed before heading back to the kitchen where Hannibal finishes making breakfast.

“You do realize we left our clothes on the boat.”

“I will retrieve them later,” Hannibal says, cooking sausage that smells amazing, “Don’t worry.”

Will watches him for far too long, enjoying being even across the room, and knows that he’s going to forgive him.

He’s just not ready yet.

Will puts a hand on his belly and feels the eggs flutter.

We’re gonna be ok.

Chapter 44

Breakfast is nice.

They don't talk much, not really, but it's just---nice.

Will hasn't felt this nice around Hannibal in days, which is why when he ruins the calm it's such a disappointment.

"About Leanne," Hannibal starts, "I think perhaps…"

Will sighs. "I was having such a good time and you had to ruin it."

"I apologize, but after your last encounter things are going to be more strained than ever."

He smirks. "So?"

"Will…"

"I don't care, Hannibal," he says, eating the last of his eggs, "Honestly, I don't know why you're fine with humoring her delusions."

Will watches Hannibal move his hand slightly closer to his on the table before he stops.

"It's not for my sake, I assure you."

"Isn't it?" Will asks, "You said you wanted her kept in the dark about...you and me...because you didn't want to lose me. I'm sure a lot of that was because you wanted to---"

Hannibal grabs his hand. "...be with you," he finishes, "It was because I wanted to be with you, Will. I knew if I let you go your father would keep you and I from seeing each other and…I couldn't lose you."

Will pulls his hand back. "You don't know that."

"If it became known we were in a romantic relationship do you honestly believe your father would approve?"

He sets down his fork. "I don't know."

"You said you believe your father knows about your...otherness," Hannibal says softly, "Have you thought about what will happen after the eggs hatch?"

Will puts a hand on his belly. "No, I...I just thought," he looks at Hannibal, "He can't take them, I won't let him."

"He won't take *them*, Mielasis. He'll take *you*."

“He won’t,” Will hisses, his vision crimson, “I won’t let him, no. He….no...they’re *mine* and they need me.”

Hannibal kisses Will’s hand. “That is why I let Leanne have her delusions, Will. Because if she breaks away from them and sees what’s happening she may lash out.”

Will blinks back tears. “Just keep her away from me.”

“I will.”

He stares down at his belly again, his hand there still touching, and can’t help his next words.

“What are you gonna do about *her* after?” he asks, “Where is *she* gonna go?”

Hannibal doesn’t answer for way too long so Will looks at him again.

“I won’t stay here with her, not...not with....my babies.”

Hannibal smiles. “Where would you like her to go, Mielasis?”

His teeth are fanged in his mouth as he growls. “Anywhere but here.”

“There would be talk,” he whispers, “If I turned her away I couldn’t keep you and the children safe with me.”

Will squeezes his hand so tight he can feel nails digging into Hannibal’s skin.

“No one,” he whispers, shaking, “Not one person,” he repeats, “Would notice if she was gone.”

“Will…”

“Maybe one day...she just never wakes up.”

Hannibal rubs his thumb across Will’s fingers. “Will, you...you have to be certain this is what you want.”

“I’m more than certain,” he says, “I...I don’t care about her and I know she doesn’t care about me. I would’ve killed her if you hadn’t stopped me that day. I wanted to, oh god I wanted to, and…”

He sees Hannibal lean in and then back again, struggling to keep from comforting him.

“When it’s time,” Hannibal says, taking both of Will’s hands in his, “We’ll know what to do.”

Will sniffles. “Hannibal, I…”

A loud cough makes them jump apart, and Will wipes at his face just as Leanne stumbles into the dining room. She pauses in the doorway, saying nothing, and Will can’t bring himself to look at her.

“Good morning,” she says, sitting down on Hannibal’s other side, “I miss breakfast?”

Will doesn’t say a word.

“Yes, but I can reheat a plate for you.”

“I can do it myself, Hanni,” she says, “You want more, sweetheart?”

“No.”

“Why are your eyes all puffy? Have you been crying, baby?”

Will looks up at her coldly. “Do you remember what happened last night?”

She blinks at him. “Last night? Hannibal and I...we went to the doctor and...did we get into a fight about the new baby? You know sweetie, even if I have a new baby I’ll…”

Will grits his teeth and resists the urge to hurt her again. “Why do you think you’re pregnant?”

Leanne looks at Hannibal and laughs a bit oddly. “Did your Daddy not teach you about that? I know you like boys, so it’s not really all that important---”

“I like girls too,” Will hisses, “That’s not what I asked. Why do you think you’re pregnant?”

“Is that any of your business?”

Will stands up fast, shaking, and smiles at her. “No, I guess it’s really not,” he looks at Hannibal, “Can I be excused?”

Hannibal frowns. “Of course.”

He goes to leave, angry at Leanne’s convenient memory loss, and has a hand on the door when she speaks again.

“Do you want to go home to your father?”

Will freezes. “What?”

“Look at me, Will.”

“Will, I think you should go to your room,” Hannibal says, “Leanne…”

Will turns slowly, barely able to keep his normal form, and glares at her. “What?”

She looks oddly upset and not angry as she stares at him. “Do you want to go home to your father?”

He lets out a long breath. “Do *you* want me to go home to my father?”

“Will…” Hannibal whispers, “Go to your room.”

“No, no,” Leanne says, “I’ll answer him first.”

“Leanne, stop this.”

“Let her talk.”

The sudden tears that fill her eyes make Will angrier than any he’s ever seen from her.

“I wanted to see you,” she says, “I did, and yes Hannibal pushed me and...I...I don’t like that the two of you are shutting me out. But you’re my son and I want to get close to my baby. I want to be your mother again.”

Will puts both hands on his belly and feels the eggs flutter.

“You have no idea what it means to be a mother,” he whispers, “And you never will.”

He leaves the living room in tears, shaking with how upset he is, and he barely makes it to his bed before he collapses on the ground.

She was lying.

Leanne didn’t want to be his mother.

He presses down on his belly and the eggs moving makes him smile.

“You’re mine,” he whispers, “And I’ll never leave you.”

The door opens and he looks up to see Hannibal.

“Will….”

“Where is she?”

“I sedated her,” he whispers, “I...Will…”

“I hate you right now but...please could you just...hold me?”

Hannibal rushes into the room, locks the door, and pulls Will into his arms. He buries his face into Hannibal’s neck and feels calm instantly.

“As soon as I have them,” he whispers, “I want her gone.”

He feels Hannibal’s arms tighten around him. “She will be.”

“Promise?”

“Yes, Mielasis,” Hannibal says softly, “I promise.”

Will pulls back to look at him again.. “Can we just...go somewhere? I know we already swam but I just...I don’t want to be here.”

“We can go wherever you wish.”

“I don’t care,” he says, “I just don’t want to be here.”

“If you wish to go with Beverly...I would stay far behind in case of…”

Will shakes his head. “No, I...I want to be with you.”

Hannibal blinks. “You do?”

“Yes.”

He reaches out to touch Will’s cheek. “Then let’s leave as soon as possible.”

Will smiles, wiping his eyes, and Hannibal stands first to hold out a hand for him. He takes it gladly, standing with some difficulty, and they stare at each other.

“I’m just gonna grab my phone.”

“Of course.”

He grabs his cell and stuffs it into his pocket before they both leave his bedroom. The house is quiet again, too quiet, and as they walk down the hall Will can’t help but stop to stare at Leanne asleep on the couch.

She looks peaceful, normal, and still he feels nothing but hatred for her.

“Will?”

“Were you *ever* attracted to her?”

Hannibal grabs his hand. “She was....a means to an end, and the small remnants of your scent left in her were what I latched onto when we...were intimate.”

Will frowns. “So if she didn’t smell like a hint of Will would you have approached her?”

“No.”

He smiles at him. “Good.”

Hannibal smiles back. “I’m...very happy that you’re...smiling at me again.”

Will blushes. “Don’t look too much into it.”

“Of course.”

He lets go of Hannibal’s hand when they get outside and he doesn’t stop until he’s inside Hannibal’s car. The familiar scent makes him close his eyes, breathing in, and when Hannibal comes in after him he opens his eyes to see him smiling.

“What?”

“It’s nothing,” Hannibal says, starting the car, “Absolutely nothing.”

Will puts on his seatbelt and rolls down the window, feeling the breeze as they drive away.

“I don’t get all that hot,” he says, “Is that a sea monster thing?”

“Yes.”

“I always thought it was weird you wore suits when it was eighty outside,” Will laughs, closing his eyes, “But it makes sense now.”

“If you have any other questions, don’t hesitate to ask them.”

He sighs. “How old are you?” he asks, opening his eyes as he stares at him.

Hannibal doesn’t answer right away, and he’s almost sure he should take it back.

“Four hundred and thirteen.”

Will blinks. “Really?”

Hannibal frowns. “Yes.”

“That’s...pretty old.”

“I suppose.”

“And you just...are cool being with someone who’s like four hundred years younger than you?”

Hannibal doesn’t look at him. “Cool is a very flippant way to describe how I feel about you.”

“I just mean...I’m still...I dunno....I just got my driver’s license a couple of months ago, and I’ve played more video games this year than I’ve read books. I…”

He grabs Will’s hand. “The feeling I have for you transcends such trivialities, Will. We have a very long time to learn each other, if you’d ever deem to forgive me.”

Will frowns. “I just don’t want to bore you.”

“I have known you for almost three weeks now and not once have I been bored. Every time you opened yourself up to me, I...I only wanted more. Will, as I’ve told you before...I love you.”

Will squeezes his hand. “I know.”

“You were meant to be mine,” Hannibal says, “And I was meant to be yours. There is no one else for me.”

“Hannibal…”

“I don’t ask for reciprocation, Will. I am merely stating a fact.”

Will moves Hannibal’s hand to his belly. “Feel them?”

Hannibal smiles. “Yes.”

“I keep saying I wish I’d never come here but,” he places his hand over Hannibal’s, “I don’t mean that. They’re not even real babies yet but I love them already.”

“I’m happy to hear that.”

“And...I might still hate you,” he says, as a tear falls down his cheek, “But...I don’t regret meeting you either.”

Hannibal pulls into the nearest parking lot and stops the car.

“Why are we stopping?”

He undoes his seat belt and pulls Will into his arms. Will can feel him shaking against him.

“Hannibal?”

“I...apologize.”

“It’s okay.”

“I was overcome to hear you say....Will…”

Will breathes in his scent. “Yeah?”

“Could you forgive me? If given time?”

He closes his eyes. “Yes.”

Hannibal holds him tighter. “Thank you, I...I am very happy to hear that.”

“I’m gonna need someone to teach me how to take care of sea monster babies, right?”

He tenses up against Will but doesn’t let him go. “I...yes I...I suppose if that’s to be my position at your side I will be happy with it,” he whispers, “I watched my parents raise my youngest sister from infancy so I…”

Will pushes him back, laughing. “I was kidding.”

Hannibal smiles. “Oh.”

“You’re an asshole,” Will says, sighing, “But...I don’t think there’s anyone else for me either.”

He touches Will’s cheek. “Thank you.”

“I didn’t do anything.”

“You did more than you know, Mielasis,” Hannibal says, smiling still as he moves to redo his seatbelt, “Much, much more.”

Will smiles. “Oh...kay?”

“Now,” Hannibal says, “I think...I know just where to go.”

“Where?”

“I know you spoke of ordering some bigger clothing online for the duration of your pregnancy but perhaps you may wish to try on some things?”

Will frowns. “You want to take me to try on fat clothes in front of people?”

“I thought perhaps...you’d wish to try on things in order to see how they...felt?”

He puts a hand on his belly and looks down. “I don’t know, it’s...I mean…in front of people?”

“Will.”

“What?”

“Look at me.”

Will looks up and Hannibal puts a hand under his chin. “You are the most beautiful creature in the entire world no matter what size you are,” he whispers, “The fact that you’re carrying our children just makes me more...enthralled by your beauty. You will not have to be seen by anyone else’s eyes but your own, if that’s what you wish. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to feel comfort for the remaining days until the…”

“Tadpoles,” Will laughs, “Bev calls them tadpoles.”

Hannibal smiles. “Until the *tadpoles* greet the world.”

He bites his lip and stares into Hannibal’s perfect eyes. “Okay.”

“If you don’t wish to shop for clothes, we can…”

“Let’s go shopping,” Will says, smiling, “If anything it’ll help me get some shorts that fit better than the ones I have on.”

Hannibal moves back and pulls the car out of the parking space.

“I know just the place.”

“Is it far?”

“Not as far as the last place I took you, but far enough.”

Will sighs and scoots in closer to lay his head on Hannibal's side.

"Wake me up when we get there?"

"Of course."

He feels Hannibal take his hand as he starts to fade.

"I still hate you," he whispers, "But...that doesn't mean I can't feel...other feelings for you too."

Hannibal squeezes his hand. "As long as those other feelings are still there...that's fine with me."

Things might not be perfect between them yet.

But they were getting there.

Chapter 45

Will feels Hannibal shake his shoulder and sighs. “Mmmm…’m sleep.”

“Will, we’re here.”

He sighs, stretching out both arms wide groaning as he opens his eyes. “Where?”

There’s a small, brown building in front of them with no name on it.

“It doesn’t quite have a name,” Hannibal says, “But I’ve called ahead so we’ll be alone with just a handful of sales people.”

Will wipes his eyes. “How long was I out?”

“Twenty four minutes,” Hannibal says, “You seemed very tired.”

He blushes. “A little.”

“Are you thirsty? I can ask the sales people to get you something once we go inside.”

Will undoes his seat belt and pulls the mirror down to make sure his hair isn’t messy. “I’m ok, sorry if I drooled on you or anything.”

“You didn’t, Will. But even if you had…”

He reaches for Will’s hand and Will pulls it away. “I think we should get inside.”

“Yes I suppose we should.”

Hannibal leaves the car first and Will lets out a long breath he didn’t know he was holding.

Will knows Hannibal wouldn’t hurt him again, not for anything, but still the bitterness lingers when he remembers how long he lied. He can’t let himself get close to Hannibal again and then have everything ripped out from under him.

He just can’t.

There’s a small button Hannibal presses before the door makes a noise and opens. They walk inside to find a similar set up to Abel’s store but the clothes are distinctly bigger. He sees absolutely no one in the front of the store, and looks at Hannibal.

“Who opened the door?”

Hannibal smiles and walks up to the racks. “I asked we be kept alone until ready to checkout, so the staff is in the back for now.”

“How do you know so many weird places?” Will mumbles, walking up to another rack.

“I’ve had time to find them.”

He smiles at him. “I guess you have.”

They pick out several things, everyday stuff again but Hannibal sneaks in dress up clothes that Will won’t ever wear in the next month. The quiet of the store is nice, and after a while it’s almost like the two of them are the only people left in the entire world.

“I think there’s something else you haven’t told me,” Will says, as they walk toward what he assumes is the dressing room, “Isn’t there?”

Hannibal pauses in the doorway. “I...I’m not sure.”

Will smiles. “You ruined my clothes on purpose the last time, didn’t you?”

He looks down for a moment. “I...yes I suppose I did.”

He laughs. “At least you asked this time.”

Hannibal frowns. “You’re not upset?”

“That wasn’t the worst thing you did so…”

He nods and walks into the dressing area saying nothing as Will watches him hang up stuff.

“I’m not mad though, I probably needed new clothes.”

Hannibal still doesn’t talk, and he separates things onto different hooks.

“Hannibal?”

He sighs, not turning around. “I find it difficult not to worry that this *peace* between us is on unstable ground.”

Will feels his stomach hurt. “Oh.”

“I’m happy for it, Will, I very much am,” he whispers, turning to smile at Will sadly, “But I still worry that something will happen that snatches your smile away from me again.”

He wants so much to touch him but resists. “Can’t we just...hope nothing does?”

Hannibal sighs. “Yes, I suppose so but for now it’s hard not to worry.”

“Hannib---”

“I will leave you to change,” Hannibal says quickly, almost running out of the room.

Will puts a hand on his belly and feels the babies flutter across his palm. The sensation is a comfort he wouldn’t have expected. He smiles as he rubs across the hard mound.

“Hey there, tadpoles,” he whispers, “Thanks for...not making me sick yet today.”

They flutter again and he smiles.

It's so weird and yet really nice to know they're there.

"Just a couple more hours, okay?"

There's no flutter then, and he laughs. "At least one is all I ask."

They move a little and he grins before grabbing the first pair of pants.

It's big, almost too big, but Will knows he's gonna get bigger so he pulls the waist out a little. He adds a shirt but it's obvious his stomach is already at least two sizes bigger than he already was, and he sighs.

He's not sure how much longer he's gonna be able to go out of the house like this.

The next five things: two t-shirts, two swim trunks, and a pair of shorts all fit pretty good for his current belly. He doesn't want Hannibal to waste money buying him bigger and bigger things though.

But maybe he can save them for next time.

The thought makes Will pause.

Next time.

He feels oddly happy at the idea of being pregnant a second time, and tears fill his eyes as he thinks about it.

How many kids could they even have?

And...why was he so ready to imagine a life with Hannibal when he couldn't even bring himself to forgive him yet?

Will sits on the chair in the corner of the dressing room, wiping at his eyes.

"Fuck."

There's a knock at the door. "Will? Is everything alright?"

He sniffles. "Uh...yeah, it's fine."

"You're sure?"

"I'm fine, Hannibal."

"Do you have something on? May I see it?"

Will looks in the mirror and his eyes are red rimmed. It's obvious he's been crying.

"Uh, not yet."

“Will…”

He sniffles and takes off his current shirt to find another one.

“I said, not yet!”

There’s no response as Hannibal’s footsteps echo away on the hard floor. He sighs.

“Fuck.”

So much for nothing upsetting him.

Hannibal doesn’t return at all until Will comes out later, and he’s sitting on an armchair sipping from one of two mugs. He doesn’t turn when Will comes over to him with the large bunch of clothes in his arms.

“Um,” he mumbles, “I’m done.”

He seems startled at Will’s reappearance and rushes to take the heavy load from him.

“Oh, I apologize I should’ve…”

“No, it’s fine. I got it, I just…”

They stare at each other.

“Hannibal, I---”

“You were upset,” Hannibal whispers so quietly Will isn’t sure anyone could hear other than him, “I...I could smell your distress. I apologize for intruding.”

Will sighs. “I wasn’t upset.”

“Yes, you were.”

“I was, a little,” he mumbles, “I’m fine now, ok?”

Hannibal nods. “Which sizes worked best?”

“I..I liked the top ones a lot, and the one under the first seven is a little big but...I liked how it looked.”

Hannibal walks over to a rack and starts to separate the pile. “You’ll get bigger, so it’s not as if it’s unneeded.”

“Yeah, but I don’t want you to keep wasting so much money on me. I…”

He sets down the pile Will likes, and turns to him. “Will, there’s nothing I wouldn’t give you if I could. You have to understand that.”

Will’s chest aches just looking at him. “I...I know.”

“I will find a few more things so please sit and have your drink. It’s water with lemon.”

Will sits down and watches him go, sipping on his water. He hears Hannibal’s voice even from far into the next room, and it’s a comfort that he latches onto instantly. He rubs his belly again and the tadpoles flutter.

He knows spending the day alone with Hannibal will make it harder to resist him, and yet he doesn’t want to resist. Not anymore. The thought of giving in makes Will’s whole body warm, and when Hannibal returns with more clothes Will doesn’t trust himself to speak.

“I’ve found some more things that—”

Will grabs the few things in his hand and practically runs back to the fitting room in tears. He has to calm himself, shaking as he tries to change clothes, and he leans against the wall closing his eyes.

A knock comes not a minute later.

“Will?”

“I’m fine!” he yells, “I’m fine. I...I just need a minute.”

“Will, if I’ve upset you…”

“You...you didn’t. I’m just…”

“I apologize if something I said, or a piece of clothing…”

Will puts his hand on the door as a tear falls down his face. “You didn’t do anything,” he whispers, his voice thick, “I promise.”

Hannibal sighs. “I’m sure that’s not true, but I won’t continue to push you. I’ll wait outside.”

He doesn’t move until he’s sure Hannibal is gone, and tries on the stuff Hannibal gave him but finds no joy in it.

Will sighs and puts his own clothes back on before he opens the door.

Hannibal’s scent still lingers in the air and he breathes it in, putting a hand on his belly. The eggs don’t move, and he wipes the tears from his eyes before he finds Hannibal. The look he gives makes Will feel worse, and forces himself to smile as he hands him the pile.

“I like them all.”

“You’re sure?”

“Yeah, everything was great.”

He can practically feel Hannibal’s sadness as he hands him his water.

“Please finish before we go.”

Will downs all the lemon water in one go and sets the mug on the table. “Let’s go.”

He walks ahead of Hannibal, trying not to be affected, but the need is still there.

It’s going to continue to be there as long as he keeps Hannibal at arm’s length.

Will stands off to the side as staff appears out of nowhere to start ringing up his pregnancy clothes. A few of them look his way, but they pay most of their attention to Hannibal while folding his new stuff into fancy white bags with no name.

He doesn’t get to see or hear a total, and when Hannibal turns holding three bags in his hands Will forces himself to smile again.

“Want me to help?”

“Of course not.”

“Can I at least get the door?”

“Yes, please.”

Will holds the door as Hannibal walks out, his scent tickling Will’s nose as he passes by, and that familiar warmth makes him ache.

It’s only been a few days since he learned the truth, and pushed Hannibal away but it feels like a lifetime.

“Will?”

He smiles, shaking his head as he lets the door go before walking to the other side of the car.

“Sorry, I got lost in thought.”

“Are you sure you’re alright?”

“I’m fine, Hannibal. Let’s just go.”

“Will..”

Will gets into the car and buckles his seatbelt before staring out of the window.

He hears Hannibal’s door close and the scent of him makes Will warm again.

“Your distressed scent is growing,” he whispers, “It hasn’t been this bad since after I confessed my true nature to you. Will, if something is wrong you can tell me. Please tell me.”

He closes his eyes. “I can’t.”

“Will, please.”

“It’s getting harder,” he whispers, “Not to just...give in. I miss you so much.”

Hannibal is quiet.

“Will…”

“It broke me,” he says, wiping tears from his face, “And I’m just now starting to want to be close to you again but...I feel like there’s got to be more. There’s got to be something else you’re hiding to hurt me again and I can’t do it,” he hisses, turning to look at him, “I can’t let you in again if you’re still….”

Hannibal reaches out his hand but stops. “Ask me anything you wish,” he whispers, “Anything at all.”

Will sighs. “I don’t---”

“Anything, Will. I will tell you it all. Do you want to know how I killed the monsters who took my family from me? I’ll explain it to you in great detail. Do you want to know how many times I wanted to kill Leanne? One hundred and forty two. Any secrets I have, they’re yours. All of them. I will *not* lose you again, if there’s any way for us to be…”

Will’s lip quivered as he let out a whimper. “How many people have you killed?”

Hannibal’s skin is blue when he reaches for Will’s hand. “More than I can remember,” he whispers, “But none since I found you. You’ve consumed my heart, my soul, and my life. All I can think about is you, Will. Nothing else matters but you.”

Will grabs his hand and squeezes as tears fall down his face. “Hannibal, I…,” he says softly, “I *want* to feel like I can trust you again and not have it hurt. Can I?”

Hannibal kisses his fingers. “Yes, Mielasis, yes. You are my everything, I…”

He wipes tears off his face and the pain in his chest is so painful he can hardly breathe.

“The bodies,” he says, staring at their hands, “What do you do with the bodies?”

Hannibal doesn’t hesitate.

“I consume them,” he says, “Piece by piece. We’ve shared some of my kills together, you and I.”

Will looks up at him in surprise. “You fed me people?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, squeezing his hand, “Does that upset you?”

His teeth suddenly feel heavy in his mouth at the idea, and the warmth he’s been fighting all day feels like an inferno. He digs his claws into Hannibal’s palm and looks at him with red eyes.

“No,” he whispers, “No, it doesn’t. It makes me...hungry.”

“Will…”

“You cooked them for me? For...*her*?”

He nods. “Yes, Leanne had them.”

Will pulls his hand back and growls looking away. “I don’t…I…”

“Will, look at me.”

He shakes his head.

“Did you kill the girl on the beach at Molly’s?”

“No, that was not me. I told you I have not killed anyone since you arrived. Not one person.”

“I don’t want her to have any more,” he whispers, “They’re...mine. I...I want them to be mine.”

“Will…”

“I want...I…” his voice shakes as he looks at him again, “I just...I want all of you to be mine.”

Hannibal smiles. “I have been yours since the moment you dropped the cup on my shoe.”

Will raises their hands up and squeezes them together again.

“So have I.”

“Will, please.”

He can feel the heat rising as he moves in closer to touch Hannibal’s cheek.

“I...I…”

A sudden vibration in his pocket makes him stop.

“Will?”

“Someone’s calling me.”

He lets go and pulls out his phone but the number calling isn’t one he recognizes.

“Will, is that you?”

He frowns. “Um, yes?”

“This is Beverly’s mom. I was just calling because Beverly hasn’t checked in since last night. She told us she was staying over with a friend, and we thought it might be you. Is she with you?”

Will looks at Hannibal. “Bev’s not here, Mrs. Katz. I haven’t talked to her since last night.”

Her mother sighs. “I was hoping it was you, because yours is the one she texted the most on our last bill.”

“She was upset about Abigail Hobbs last night,” he whispers, “Did you call the Hobbs house?”

“Garrett says Abigail hasn’t seen her either. If you do hear from her, Will, please call us. I think we’re going to have to call the police.”

Will’s lip curls. “I will, Mrs. Katz. I promise.”

He ends the call and Hannibal glares out the front window. “Garrett has taken her.”

“Yes.”

“It seems,” he growls, “There will be one more for our consumption soon.”

Will grabs his hand. “Hannibal…”

“It’s nearly noon, Will,” he says, starting the car, “He’s waiting for his lure to catch a monster. I must not keep him waiting any longer.”

Will has tears in his eyes as he pulls down the notifications on his phone.

He’s got fifteen text messages that he never once looked at since last night.

All of them are from Bev. He reads the last four.

I can’t stop thinking about Abby.

She’s got to be so fucking scared.

I can’t just let her stay there, Will. I can’t just let him hurt her.

I just can’t.

Will’s vision is red as he tosses his phone down and he growls, shaking with anger that seems to almost consume him. Worse and worse thoughts fill his head as they drive back, and by the time they get close to home his hunger is for one thing only.

“I will park the car at the house and swim to the Hobbs’ house. It will leave me without a phone but it’s best that this is not traced back to me. Once I’ve gotten Beverly out and…”

Will grabs his wrist. “I’m going with you.”

“No.”

“Hannibal…”

“I will *not* put you in danger, Will.”

“She’s my best friend!”

“Will, I cannot…I WILL NOT let you near that man again. You care about Beverly, I understand that, but I can handle Hobbs on my own.”

Will pulls the car to the side of the road and Hannibal puts it in park fast before they tumble into the ditch.

“Do you really think I want to be sitting at home all night worrying about both of you? I *need* this, Hannibal, and I’m going whether you like it or not. This is my fight too. If he’s really going after us, after *our kind*, then the babies are in danger and I can’t...I need to do this.”

Hannibal has tears in his eyes as he touches Will’s face. “I cannot be so close to getting you into my arms again and lose you so needlessly.”

Will shakes his head .”You won’t,” he whispers, “You won’t. You...you have me, I promise. You…”

Hannibal leans in so close Will’s sure he’s going to kiss him but he stops.

“We will consume him,” he growls, “Together.”

“Yes,” Will says, his vision red, “Yes, yes.”

His fingers brush Will’s lips. “I will save the kiss I know you want me to give you for when your mouth is covered in his blood.”

Will feels his backside get wet and he nods, cheeks flushed as the warmth builds.

“Hannibal…”

He squeezes Will’s hand once more before pulling back onto the road.

No words need to be said.

There will be blood spilled tonight.

And it won’t be theirs.

Chapter 46

Leanne greets them at the door looking oddly normal.

“Where have you two been and why wasn’t I invited?”

Hannibal takes her wrist before she can move closer to Will. “Will needed some new clothing as he’s...grown out of the ones I got him before. But we’re home now.”

Her eyes glaze over as she smiles between the two of them, and Hannibal catches her before she stumbles. “Oh, I think my baby decided to use Hanni’s credit card limits huh?”

Will has to look away so she can’t see his face, his eyes red and teeth heavy in his mouth.

“I’m gonna go lay down.”

He rushes past them carrying the shopping bags and sets everything down on his dresser including his phone, ignoring the beginning of a crack in the screen.

They can’t leave until Leanne’s dealt with, he knows that, but the longer he has to wait the more scared he is for Bev.

Will puts a hand on his belly, shaking, and stares down. “We’re gonna be ok,” he whispers, rubbing across the hard bump, “We’ll be fine.”

The tadpoles flutter across his palm and he blinks back tears.

Everything is going to be ok.

It has to be.

Hannibal comes in and shuts the door while wearing black swim trunks that go just past his ankles.

“Will...are you alright?”

He stands, wiping his eyes before he takes off his shirt. “Sorry, I was just…”

Hannibal touches his shoulder. “Leanne is asleep,” he whispers, “If you’ve decided you’d rather stay…”

Will goes over to his bags and pulls out a blue pair of trunks. “I’m going,” he whispers, “I was just…”

“Will.”

“This is all my fault,” he says, his voice cracking, “If I wasn’t...if he hadn’t seen me…”

Hannibal wraps his arms around him from behind and Will leans against him.

“No it isn’t,” he whispers, “It’s his, all his.”

“Bev has to be so scared.”

“Will…”

Will pushes out of Hannibal’s arms and pulls down everything below his waist. He can feel Hannibal’s gaze burning into his skin and has to ignore the warmth that starts to settle in just before he pulls up his new trunks.

“Don’t,” he hisses, shaking as he closes his eyes, “I...I need to focus.”

“I’m sorry, it’s hard for me not to look at you and...hunger for things other than homicide.”

He turns to look at Hannibal again and everything he sees is crimson.

“I know, but...we have to finish this.”

Hannibal puts his hands on Will’s cheeks. “I wish you’d stay.”

“I know,” Will sighs, “But I can’t.”

He nods. “I know.”

They leave the house and rush toward the lake holding hands. Will embraces the perfect cold as they swim together, never letting go, and his worries for Bev intensify the further they are.

Has he hurt her?

Is she still alive?

She has to be.

Hannibal slows down a lot quicker than he expects, and they move against the lake wall. He feels him squeeze his hand.

Will.

Will squeezes back.

What’s wrong?

I expected him to be watching the water.

Will strains to hear movement above them.

There is none.

He’s protecting his lure.

Will's claws lengthen as he squeezes Hannibal's hand again.

I'm ready.

The sun is still out as they resurface, but even if they are seen coming out of the water in swim trunks no one will care much. There's a lot of trees on the Hobbs property, almost too many, and he wonders why.

Hannibal doesn't let go of his hand still as they walk.

How long has he been here?

Too long.

They clear the trees and come upon a large open yard behind what looks like a small red house. There's a barn to their left, and Will squeezes Hannibal's hand just looking toward the red wood round monstrosity. It's bigger than the house, bigger than most houses, and it's not hard to guess where they're supposed to go.

He strains his hearing, hoping to get even the slightest sound of Bev, but there's nothing but mumbles of others.

We should have done this under cover of darkness. He wouldn't have seen us coming.

We couldn't wait that long.

Hannibal pulls Will to him with one arm, and stares down at him with red eyes.

"I love you, Will. If anything happens…"

"Don't," Will says, his voice shaking, "Don't."

He kisses Will's forehead. "If anything happens," he whispers, "Know that the short time we've shared was everything to me."

"Hanni---"

Hannibal takes off running and Will struggles to catch him.

He wants to yell out but knows that it'll give them away, but he's in tears again watching Hannibal climb up before he even makes it to the barn at all.

Help me!

Hannibal stares down at him, panting, and for a minute Will thinks he's gonna leave him down there to do this on his own. He reaches down and Will grabs his arm. The ease in which Hannibal lifts him makes Will remember just how strong he really is, and they're lost in each other's eyes again.

"Stay close to me."

Will nods.

There's a set of what seems like doors but might be windows that they slip into with ease. The sound of Garrett's rambling voice makes Will's skin crawl as they walk along the outer edge.

"....and then my Grandfather...he saw it! Remember Abby? Remember what I told ya? About Granpappy?"

Abigail sniffles. "Yes, Daddy."

"And HE KNEW our family would find one again! HE KNEW! We're *so close,* baby girl. So goddamn close."

"Dad, can I just...loosen her a little? She's…"

"I knocked her out, Abby! She don't give a shit!" he laughs, pacing with a weapon in his hand Will can't quite make out, "Stop worryin' about her! She's sleepin' with that thing, you know? They told me they were! I dunno why she came here or what her angle was, but he'll come! I KNOW he'll come! I SAW HIM! Granpappy and your Daddy, Abbygirl. We're the ONLY Hobbs' who've seen them and soon you will be too!"

"Oh...ok, Daddy."

Will pushes down the guilt that his and Bev's lie made her a worse target.

You didn't do this, Will. He did.

He squeezes Hannibal's hand.

I can hurt him right here, right now.

NO. You will not put yourself in a vulnerable state, not here.

Hannibal…

All it takes is a long touch for me, Will, and I'm stronger.

Will stares down at the Hobbs' family, and sees Bev slumped in a chair not far from them.

Then you need a distraction.

He lets out a long breath and drops his shift before taking a jump.

Will, no!

The fall would kill most men, all men really, but luckily for Will he isn't one.

Garrett's eyes widen when he sees Will, the triumph and fear in his gaze hard to miss.

"I *knew* it!"

Will growls.

"*Let her go.*"

Hobbs laughs. "You think I'm gonna let her go now that I got what I wanted? She's nothing!"

Will hears Hannibal drop down a lot quieter than he did in the darkness.

"If she's nothing, let her go," he says, letting his body shift back as he puts up his hands, "You got me."

Hobbs looks him over in an oddly slow way. "You're either real stupid, or you're not alone."

"I'm completely…"

"Will?"

Bev's voice throws him off but he doesn't look away from his prey. "Yeah, Bev, I'm here."

She lets out a sob and starts to shake the chair she's tied against. "Oh no, no, no, no, no," she whimpers, "You have to run, Will. He's crazy, he...he wants to kill you. I…"

Garrett raises the weapon in his hands and aims it right at Will.

He can see it clearly now.

It's a small crossbow, fully loaded, and the fear Will's held back since they got into the water returns full force. He can't help but touch his belly, and Garrett seems to notice immediately.

"Stomach ache there, little monster? You feelin' sick?"

Hannibal is nowhere to be seen and Will feels tears in his eyes. "I'm gonna kill you."

Hobbs laughs. "Oh yeah? Abby, honey...you wanna help me out?"

"Daddy, I…"

"NOW! Do as you're told!"

"Daddy, I...I…"

Hannibal strikes fast, knocking Hobbs down to the ground. He screams as Hannibal wrestles with him, and Will grows his claws fast, slashing Bev's restraints. She's in tears as he helps her stand.

"Ok?"

She nods. "I'm ok, you can…"

He doesn't have to be told twice.

Will rushes toward Hobbs and Hannibal just in time to see Hannibal bite into his neck.

He tries to crawl away, holding the wound, and Abigail screams. “Daddy!”

Hannibal stands up slowly, skin blue, and grabs Hobbs up with one hand as Abigail’s sobs can be heard echoing off the walls. Will is ready to bite into his other side when Bev screams.

“ABBY NO!”

Will turns in time to see her raise the crossbow and fire.

At him.

He doesn’t know why he freezes.

Fear?

Surprise?

But one minute he’s standing there ready to pounce on his prey and the next he’s thrown to the side as Hannibal steps in the path of the bolt.

It hits him in the lower abdomen, and Will growls, throwing himself at Abigail in a rage. She screams as he slits her throat, the clean brush of his claws tearing into her jugular so fast she goes down instantly.

“Will!”

He flips around at Bev’s yell and runs to where she’s trying to help Hannibal stand.

“I’m...just fine,” Hannibal says, ripping out the bolt as blue blood drips down his stomach.

“No, you’re not,” Will whimpers, “You…”

Bev’s crying as she tries to hold him. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m…”

“This...is not your fault,” Hannibal says as they head for the house, “There are some family bonds even love can’t break through. Don’t touch anything with your hands,” he whispers, “Not one thing.”

They cover their hands as they enter the Hobbs house, and Bev leaves them to find some first aid supplies.

“I’m stronger than I look,” Hannibal says, “I just...need rest.”

Will can’t see through his tears. “I shouldn’t have come.”

Hannibal smiles at Will, touching his cheek as blood still stains his lips. “It doesn’t matter now,” he whispers, “What matters is...I owe you a blood-stained kiss but it seems I’ll have to provide the blood.”

“I love you,” Will says, laughing as his voice shakes, “I love you so much.”

“Will…I know.”

Will kisses him slowly, not rushing, and the touch is like coming home again. He can taste Hobbs as Hannibal deepens the kiss, pulling him closer, and before long he’s warm all over even as tears stream down his cheeks.

“Um….”

They break apart at Bev’s voice, and Will moves away just enough to take the supplies from her. “Thank you.”

She sniffles. “No, thank *you*.”

He nods and turns to Hannibal. “Will, I’m perfectly capable of attending to myself.”

“Don’t,” Will says, “Just...don’t.”

Bev doesn’t move as she watches them, or even say anything. He looks at her a few times as he works, hands shaking as he tries covers Hannibal's wound, and when he’s done, he smiles at Hannibal again. “Good?”

Hannibal smiles. “Yes, very.”

"You're sure that's all you need?"

"I heal very fast, Will."

Will puts his hand over the covered wound, tears in his eyes. "Then you didn't have to..."

Hannibal grabs his hand. "I heal fast, Mielasis," he whispers, "But you and the children...would not."

Will nods, feeling shaken still, and looks up at him. “Now what?”

“Now, you will go, and I will stay to clean up the mess.”

“What? No! I’m not going anywhere.”

“Will…”

“Tell us what to do and we’ll do it.”

Hannibal sighs. “Leave Beverly with me, Will, but you need to go. She’s needed for what comes after, but you were never here.”

“What?”

“Will,” Bev starts to say.

“No!” he yells, “Why can’t I stay?”

“Beverly is going to call the police and tell them what happened here. You are not a part of this any longer.”

“But…”

“Will, please.”

“What about the bodies?” Will growls, “You tore Garrett’s throat out with your teeth, and I clawed Abigail’s throat.”

“They will be found floating in the water, victims of the same wild animal that’s been attacking people all over the lake.”

“The blood in the barn?”

“They tried to defend themselves and fell into the water. The fear this will leave with the town may end up saving more lives from the *real* monster at large.”

“What’s Bev gonna say?”

“She was being kept in the house by Garrett himself after he found out she was dating his daughter and managed to escape just as everything happened.”

Bev sniffles. “It’s...not a bad story.”

“But I…”

She comes up to Will and hugs him. “Thank you,” she whispers, “But please go, if not for me, for the tadpoles. Okay?”

He steps back, stomach hurting as he stares at them. “I can help.”

“Do this for me, Will. Please.”

Will turns away from the both of them and runs out the door. He jumps into the water fast, so upset he can hardly breathe, but has to tell himself it’s better this way.

Hannibal knows what he’s doing, obviously, and the sooner he gets home the better.

He’s so stuck in thought he gets a little lost but manages to resurface in an area that looks vaguely familiar. It’s not home, but he’s sure he can find his way from here.

The yard he goes through is just off the park, and he’s soaking wet as he starts to go through different yards.

It’s there as he’s trying to find his way back that he stumbles into someone he doesn’t expect.

“Will?”

He freezes and turns to see Matt Brown standing in an alley behind the house he's cutting through. "Um...hi."

Matt frowns. "You lost?"

"No," he says, covering his stomach with one hand, "I just…"

Matt smiles. "You were swimming and got lost, huh?"

"I'm fine."

"I can give you a ride," he says, "If you want."

"No," Will says, backing off, "I can find my way home just fine."

Matt nods. "Okay, okay. If you happen to see my dog, let me know. I'm still looking."

Will frowns. "Okay."

He turns to go, and Matt's voice stops him cold.

"You're looking good, Will," he says, sounding creepier, "You're looking *really* good."

Will takes off into a run and doesn't look back all the way home.

He goes right through his window and to the bathroom when he gets there, showering off every reminder of tonight. The worry for Bev and Hannibal claws at him as he bathes, so much so that by the time he's done Will is bone tired.

The locks his bedroom door behind him as he crashes, and when he wakes up it's light outside again. Will gets dressed so fast he nearly stumbles into the hallway where he smells something cooking.

He runs down the hall, through the dining room, and right into the kitchen where Hannibal is standing at the stove.

He smiles at him. "Good morning, Will."

Will should be mad that he made him leave last night, but instead he bursts into tears throwing himself into his arms. Hannibal holds him close, whispering comforting noises into his ear, and wraps arms around him.

"I'm here, Mielasis," he whispers, "I'm here."

I love you, Hannibal.

I love you, Will.

Will feels the eggs flutter between them and buries his face into Hannibal's neck, basking in the scent of him.

Everything is going to be ok.

Chapter 47

Will doesn't move far from Hannibal at all during breakfast, which seems to suit Hannibal just fine. He leans against him as he eats, content to be close, and Hannibal runs his hand down Will's back.

"I'm sorry," he sighs, "I just...I need to be close."

"Don't apologize."

He takes a bite of his eggs, and steals Hannibal's toast to make a little rolled up sandwich he eats slowly. "How did things go?"

"Just fine," Hannibal says, "I left Beverly late and she said she'd call right after. It's been on the news. They're calling it Family Horror or something along those lines."

"I should call her Mom."

"Yes, you should."

Will puts a hand over the spot Hannibal was shot and feels him wince. "It still hurts?"

"We're not impervious to damage, Will," he says, taking Will's hand, "We just have thicker skin, live longer, and heal faster."

Will's stomach hurts just thinking about it. "You could've died."

"But I did not."

"If you'd shifted…"

Hannibal kisses his hand. "I was not about to walk around in my other skin there, not yet. They didn't deserve to see either of us that way."

"I did it to distract him."

"I know, Mielasis. I know."

"I killed someone," Will says, squeezing his hand.

"Yes, you did. Do you regret it?"

"No. Even if I knocked that crossbow out of her hand she would've tried to hurt one of us again."

"She was a victim of her father's love."

“That wasn’t love,” he growls, “She was abused, I know that, but...I’d do it again. She hurt you.”

“Will,” Hannibal whispers, lifting his chin up, “I’m not judging you.”

“Even if she didn’t hurt you, just *wanting* to hurt either of us would be reason enough.”

Hannibal presses his lips to Will’s softly. “I know, Will. I know.”

“Bev…”

“She cared for her, but she’ll get over the loss.”

He sighs and lays against Hannibal again. The angle is slightly uncomfortable but he doesn’t care. “If she hadn’t gone there, we wouldn’t have had to either.”

“Do you blame her?”

“I don’t know,” he mumbles, “I just...I don’t want to think about it. I just want you right now.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I’m happy to hear that I’ve become a comfort to you once again.”

“You never stopped being that, I just...didn’t trust you anymore.”

“I know.”

“I trust you now,” Will whispers, “I...I trust you more than anyone.”

“Will…”

He looks up at him again, and Hannibal puts both hands on his face. “Something else happened last night.”

Hannibal’s lip curls. “You saw *him*.”

“He didn’t hurt me.”

“Will….”

“He offered to give me a ride because I got lost swimming, and...it was *my* fault. I...nothing happened, he just was weird like he usually is.”

Hannibal pulls Will close, wrapping his arms around him. “He knows you’re carrying, and is planning something.”

“He could’ve hurt me right then and there but he didn’t.”

“That means nothing.”

“Hannibal…”

“Our kind lives to mate, procreate, and spawn. He has done none of those things yet, and you are right there to be taken. There is no way that Matthew doesn’t want you, Will. He’s just trying his hardest to confuse us.”

Will presses his face against Hannibal’s neck. “I don’t want him.”

“That doesn’t matter.”

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal lifts Will’s chin and his eyes are red. “His coloring is unlike any I’ve ever seen in my lifetime, and his methods are trying to get a rise out of us. I’m still...unsure as to why. I should not have let you go last night.”

“I’m ok.”

“Yes, but...next time…”

Will kisses him, shivering as Hannibal’s hands come to his hair, and can’t help but moan when he feels the heat rise through him. He’s missed this so much, and he knows it’s not a good idea to do it here but can’t seem to stop.

Hannibal pulls him up into his lap, and the slight wince as he leans in closer makes Will pause.

“We shouldn’t,” he pants, vision red, “You’re hurt.”

“It’s just a scratch, Will,” Hannibal whispers, “I...I ache for you in ways I didn’t know I could. Please, Will…”

“She could see,” Will gasps, “Not...here. We…”

Hannibal kisses him again, shaking as he pants for breath. “The cave,” he whispers, “We can go to the cave.”

Will feels a rush of wetness down his backside as he stands. “Yesss,” he hisses, grabbing Hannibal’s hand, “Now, now, now.”

They run, caring very little for what’s around them, and don’t bother to take off their clothes as they dive into the lake. Will knows it’s only been a few days but it feels like eons since the last time. It’s all he can think about as they swim, body filling with heat that’s barely cooled by the water, and when they make it through the small entrance he barely has time to focus before Hannibal is on him again.

He tears at Hannibal’s shirt, tossing the mess into the water, and Hannibal pulls off his pants, tossing them up onto the rock. Will doesn’t even remember how he gets naked but soon they’re pressed against the rock, moaning into each other’s mouths, and pulls away when he feels Hannibal start to shift again.

The sight of his blue skin has Will in tears and he lets go of his own shift as Hannibal reaches out with both hands to touch his face. “Will.”

“I...I should’ve known it was you,” Will whispers, laughing, “No one else does that, and no one...makes me feel this way. No one.”

Hannibal leans in to lick his cheek. “Perhaps you did,” he whispers, “In some way.”

“Please,” he says, his voice shaking, “Please just....devour me.”

He moans when Hannibal’s teeth graze his neck. “Will…”

Hannibal is gentle when he lifts WIll up onto the rock but thrusts in hard making him cry out.

“Oh god….oh….god…”

He smashes their mouths together as Hannibal fucks him, every thrust hitting his pleasure over and over again until he comes without warning. Hannibal doesn’t stop, can’t, and Will doesn’t care.

He wants more.

Hannibal growls, shaking as his long tongue runs along Will’s, and Will digs his nails into Hanniball’s neck.

Don’t stop.

Never.

I love you.

I love you.

Will feels something strange hit his back and he’s sure it’s Hannibal’s tail. He reaches for it, and his wrist is grasped tight by something else.

“What...what’s....”

Hannibal pulls back, his shift coming in and out. “What is it?”

“My wrist,” he whispers, “I... “

He gently pulls whatever grabbed Will’s wrist away. “That...was one of my secondary...sensors.”

Will’s bent almost in half as he stares at him, confused. “What?”

Hannibal thrusts in once more and Will moans again. “This.”

Will’s wrists get grabbed both at the same time as Hannibal goes for his neck. He cries out, pressing up for more, and Hannibal snarls fucking him harder as his wrists are held even

tighter.

“Tentacles,” Will gasps, “Fuck, you...have tentacles.”

“Not quite, they…”

He laughs. “They’re thick, slimy, blue, and wrapped around me right now. You have tentacles.”

Hannibal smiles. “You approve.”

“Oh god yes,” Will moans, “I...I want to feel them. I…”

His wrists are freed as Hannibal lifts him up higher. The position isn’t any less uncomfortable but WIll wraps hands around his neck. He thrusts into him relentlessly, the echoes of Will’s pleasure filled moans bouncing off the rock walls, and when Will feels a tentacle begin to stroke him he comes without warning.

The hum begins as Hannibal kisses him again, and he’s got tears running down when he starts to join in when another tentacle wraps around his soft cock.

“I...I can’t,” he moans, “I…”

Hannibal’s thrusts get slower, and Will’s dripping with sweat by now even into the water.

Don’t stop.

Don’t stop.

Never.

Will loses track of time, space, everything but Hannibal, until suddenly he comes again groaning his thin release. He bites Hannibal’s tongue as his pleased cries are devoured, and feels Hannibal suddenly tense up before falling over the edge right after.

They’re both shaking, not letting go, and Will pulls his mouth back to whisper in Hannibal’s ear.

“I love you.”

“Will..I love you.”

Don’t stop.

Never .

Will winces as Hannibal pulls out, and wraps himself around him again.

“I love it here,” he whispers.

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I found it just before you arrived,” he says, nuzzling Will’s neck, “And I knew...this was meant to be ours.”

“You hadn’t even met me yet,” Will laughs.

“I feel as if I’ve known you long before this,” he whispers, “Our bodies were two halves of the same whole.”

Will smiles as tears run down his face. “Yeah?”

“Yes.”

“Is that why it hurts when we’re apart?”

Hannibal pulls back to smile at him. “Yes, I believe so,” he whispers, putting a hand on Will’s belly, “And because of the children. They can feel how much we need each other.”

Will touches Hannibal’s blue scaled cheek. “I shouldn’t think you look hot like this, right?” he laughs.

Hannibal smiles and his teeth are all pointy sharp. Will wants to lick every one of them, or feel them in his neck. Whichever comes first.

“You’re quite a handsome creature yourself,” Hannibal teases, licking his cheek, “And you taste…”

“Like yours?”

Hannibal nuzzles his cheek. “Yes, Mielasis. You taste like mine.”

“I am,” Will whispers, his voice so quiet he can barely hear, “Yours.”

“Will…”

“If anything happens we can just run away and live here for the rest of our lives.”

Hannibal kisses him again. “Our home away from home.”

“Hannibal…”

“We must get back.”

“I don’t want to go.”

“The world awaits us, Mielasis. We’ve found our way back to each other again but the rest of the world is still there to be dealt with.”

Will sighs. “It’s been such a good morning.”

Hannibal smiles. “It can still be a great day, Will. Just wait.”

They don't bother to put their clothes back on, though Will collects the ripped pieces to put up on the rock. No one needs to know about their cave, or be alerted.

Hannibal doesn't leave Will's side as they swim back, holding his hand, and as they resurface Will hears noise from inside the house.

She's awake.

You go first, Will. I am perfectly fine here.

Will kisses him one more time before he comes out of the water, and is about to go for the door when Hannibal's voice stops him.

She's coming! The window, Will! The window!

His window is half open though it takes a bit to get the screen up, which is why he busts the corner edge getting inside.

"Fuck," he sighs, rubbing his knee.

Will looks down at his belly and pushes. "You okay in there?" he asks.

The tadpoles flutter across his palm and he breathes a sigh of relief.

He goes right for the bathroom and turns on the shower, though he barely washes away the remains of what just happened.

They're together again.

Will's never been so happy.

His smile never fades even after he's done, and he puts on some of his bigger clothes before flopping down into bed.

It's been a good morning so far.

The ring from his phone pulls Will out of his thoughts, and he gets up to grab his phone off the dresser.

"Hello?"

"Will! I'm so glad I got a hold of you! I'm sure you've heard the news."

Will sits down. "Yeah, I...I'm sorry I didn't call."

"It's alright, honey," Bev's mom says, her voice shaking, "We're just glad we got our Bevvie back."

"Is she okay?"

“She’s got a few bumps and bruises,” she says, sniffling, “But...I think she’ll be out later today if you want to see her.”

Will frowns. “Does she want to see me? I wouldn’t...I know she’s been through a lot.”

“Maybe call later and see, ok?”

“Does she still have her phone?”

“We’ve gotten her a new one.”

Will blinks back tears. “I’m really glad she’s ok, Mrs. Katz.”

“I know, honey, I know. I’ll give her a big hug from you, ok?”

He nods. “Okay.”

“Thank you for being Bev’s friend, Will. She doesn’t have many, but you’ve been so good for her these past few weeks.”

Will closes his eyes.

Had he?

Had he really?

“She’s...been good to me too.”

“Have a good day, honey.”

“Thank you. You too.”

The call ends and Will covers his face with his hands.

Part of him is still upset with Bev for going to the Hobbs house alone in the first place, but another part knows if he hadn’t been in her life she would’ve been just fine.

Will blinks back tears.

There’s a knock at his door and he opens it without calling out.

Leanne is on the other side.

“I was just coming to tell you I’m going to get us some good eats down the road because Hanni is being such a crank. So....have you been crying, baby?”

He sighs. “Yeah, I...have you heard about Bev?”

“Yes,” she says, nodding, “On the news. That was...terrible.”

“Yeah.”

She doesn’t make a move to comfort him, and Will wonders what’s going through her head.

“Are you hungry?”

“I could eat I guess.”

“You wanna take a ride?” she asks.

“No!” Will almost shouts, “I...no.”

“I’ll bring you back something good,” she says, “I’ll be a little while.”

Will blinks as she turns and walks away.

He goes to the window and sees her head for Hannibal’s car.

“I gave her my keys,” Hannibal says, coming up behind him, “She was acting rather amorous and I know you don’t wish for her to touch me.”

Will sighs as Hannibal hugs him. “So you just give her your car?”

“I told her I didn’t want to make her any food so she got angry and left.”

Will frowns. “She was acting weird again.”

“She’s had significant damage from...both of us. It’s to be expected.”

He moves Hannibal’s hand to his belly.

“And she’ll get more.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Yes, she will.”

Chapter 48

They're laying in bed together watching the end of Slash Camp when the Bentley pulls up again. Will whines when Hannibal gets up, and he touches Will's cheek. "I'll join you this evening, Mielasis. Don't worry."

He groans. "I'm not sure how much longer I can wait."

Hannibal smiles and kisses him. "You have to learn patience sometime."

Will sighs as Hannibal walks to the door. "Why?"

He turns to smile at him. "You're going to be a father."

"I'll be the fun one," Will teases.

"We'll see."

Will flops down on the bed and sighs again before he picks up his phone. His hands shake as he finds Bev's name, and the ringing goes on for what feels like forever before it stops.

"Hi Will."

"Bev, I---"

She sniffles. *"Don't, ok? I've...cried enough today."*

He sighs. *"You're ok?"*

"As good as can be expected."

"I'm sorry," he says, blinking back tears, *"For all of it."*

She's quiet.

"What exactly are you apologizing for?"

"I..."

"Will," she sighs, *"I'm not angry with you. I'm…"*

A muffled voice can be heard on the other end.

"Bev?"

She sighs. *"I gotta go, Will. Just...I love you, ok? I'm not...I just need time."*

Will nods, wiping his face. *"Okay."*

“Go hug your boyfriend, ok?”

He smiles. *“Okay. Goodnight.”*

“Goodnight, Will.”

Will sets his phone down and opens up his laptop. The articles about the “Hobbs House Horror” seem to genuinely believe Bev’s story and talk about the “wild animal” attacking people in the lake.

How many more people would be dead before summer was gone?

He closes his eyes, remembering Abigail’s face as he cut her throat, and expects to feel some sort of remorse.

He feels nothing.

His hand goes to his belly and he pushes down to feel the tadpoles flutter across his palm.

“I won’t let anyone hurt you.”

No one is more important than his family.

Will sighs just a knock pulls him out of his thoughts. “Yeah?”

Leanne peeks her head in and the soft smile she gives him is oddly normal. “I got you some fries and...a fish sandwich.”

Will can smell the food and his stomach growls as he takes the bag. “I...thanks.”

“Honey, I know we...we’ve been getting off on a bad time and...I’ve been sick.”

He picks up a fry and stops with it halfway to his mouth putting his hand down. “Leanne…”

She touches his arm and he hates the feeling but doesn’t push her away.

“I want to be your Mommy, Will. I do.”

Will looks away. “I think the time for that is over.”

“Will…”

“Thanks for the food,” he mumbles, “Just...please leave me alone.”

Leanne looks heartbroken, and he hates how much he wishes he could trust it. There’s something more going on behind her eyes, he just knows it.

She says nothing when she goes, and he stares at the food for a minute before tossing the whole bag in the trash.

He can’t trust her.

Not anymore.

Will grabs his dirty clothes and walks toward the laundry room, hoping for an excuse to be alone with Hannibal. He pauses when he hears them talking.

“I know I am,” she says, her voice sounding a little desperate, “You keep saying I can’t be but…”

“Leanne…”

“I *know* I am,” she snarls, “You...you just want a reason to....you just want to break it off, don’t you?”

Hannibal sighs. “And if I did?”

“I’ll *never* let you go,” she whispers, “Not for anyone. Not...not even…”

Will steps into the living room and they both turn to him. Leanne is holding something in her left hand and Will doesn’t have to ask what it is.

“Everything ok?”

Hannibal nods. “Do you need help?”

“I could use a little, yeah,” he lies.

“Hanni…”

“This discussion is *over*, Leanne.”

They both walk through toward the laundry room and Will drops all his clothes to the floor before pulling Hannibal in for a kiss. He sighs as he’s filled with warmth, and smiles. “Hi.”

“Hello,” Hannibal says, smiling.

He kisses him again.

You enjoyed that.

More than I should’ve, yeah.

Hannibal silently kisses his cheek and his voice in Will’s head makes Will shiver.

Never deny yourself enjoyment.

Will picks up some of the clothes off the floor and tosses them into the washing machine still smiling.

“What was the fight about?” he asks, knowing Leanne could be listening.

“She took some at home tests and they came out positive.”

“But she’s not pregnant?”

“I took tests of my own when I brought her to my office.”

“Hmm,” he says, tossing the last of it in, “I bet she was mad.”

“Your mother has trouble not getting what she wants.”

Will walks up and takes Hannibal’s hands, putting them on his baby bump.

“I guess that’s where I get it from.”

Hannibal smiles. “Perhaps.”

She’s planning something.

What makes you think that?

She was nice to me.

Hannibal takes Will’s hands and kisses them. “I will protect you.”

“I know you will.”

“Today’s been a long day and the sun hasn’t even gone down yet.”

“Will…”

“I talked to Bev.”

“How is Beverly?”

“Upset,” he says, “But...she says it’s not at me.”

Hannibal pulls him into his arms and they lean against the door.

“Things will take time.”

“I’ve got a lot of that I guess.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I need to go.”

He frowns. “You…”

“Are you going back to your room?”

“Yeah.”

“I will bring you something to eat.”

Will smiles. “How do you know I didn’t eat already?”

I don't taste anything but myself on your tongue.

He kisses him again.

"Hurry."

"I will."

Will doesn't feel that familiar ache when he leaves, which is new, and he's smiling as he goes to his room minutes later. The smell of the food he threw away isn't there, and he finds his garbage can empty.

His smile widens.

Hannibal is too good to him.

Will dresses down as he waits to go back to the laundry room again, and he pauses as he takes off shirt.

There was a noise outside.

He walks to the window and looks out at the lake, straining his ears to hear the noise again.

It doesn't come.

"Weird."

Will frowns and goes back to find a shirt, tossing off his shorts for some pajama pants. A blue tank top that barely covers his baby bump finishes the comfy change and he lays down grabbing his remote.

His stomach growls again as he scrolls through things to stream, and settles on some mindless gorefest. "We'll eat soon," he whispers, patting his belly.

The movie is boring, and he can barely keep his eyes open, which is why suddenly Hannibal's shaking him awake. "Will."

He yawns and blinks up at him. "I fell asleep?"

"Yes, I'm sorry I took so long. I've brought you a meal, though it may have gotten cold."

Will sits up, thankful for the light he turned on, and smiles when he sees what's on the plate.

"You made me pizza."

"I know the eggs have been good about you eating this, so I thought it best to choose."

He takes a bite and sighs. "Mmmm…"

Hannibal smiles. "I take it you approve?"

Will nods, eating some more, and Hannibal settles on the bed. “I’ve brought more on the dresser, if you’re hungry.”

He lays his head against Hannibal’s shoulder as he finishes the first piece, and moves to climb into his lap. “You’re too good to me.”

Hannibal brushes the curls from his forehead. “There’s never too good where you’re concerned.”

Will licks his lips and kisses him. “Is she asleep?”

“Of course,” Hannibal says, “And I took the liberty of finishing your laundry.”

He feels warm all over, pulling at Haninbal’s shirt. “Hannibal…”

“Are you still hungry?”

“A little.”

“I cannot retrieve more food with you in my arms.”

Will wraps arms around his neck and laughs. “Are you sure about that?”

“Mielasis…”

He kisses down Hannibal’s neck, and revels in the shudder that runs through him while every bit of skin turns more blue. “I bet she never made you feel like this,” he whispers.

Hannibal sighs, grabbing Will’s hair. “No one has but you, Mielasis. No one.”

He bites down and Hannibal groans but doesn’t stop him.

“Mine,” he growls, feeling his claws lengthen as Hannibal falls back onto his bed.

“Will, the food is…”

Will lifts his head. “I don’t care.”

Hannibal caresses his cheek. “What do you need, Will?”

“You,” he whispers, “Hannibal, I…”

He shoves his hand down Will’s pants before he kisses him again, growling as his tongue wraps around Wil’s the moment they touch. They don’t have to hold back anymore, not from anything, and Will arches up to every touch as his own mouth changes.

Every taste of you is better than the last.

Will whimpers as the heat rises in him just before he comes, spilling in Hannibal’s fist, shaking as the pleasure rocks through him. He pulls back, vision red, and watches as Hannibal licks his fingers.

“I never wish to stop.”

He growls and rips at his pants, desperate to touch. Hannibal won’t stop him, he knows, and when he finally frees his cock Will begins to lick.

Hannibal grips his hair. “Will..”

He wants to taste him too, his body yearns for reciprocation, and he purrs as Hannibal’s cock seems to get bigger in his mouth.

“I’m...it’s…”

Will doesn’t care.

He runs his tongue around his hardness and feels the tentacles spread along his neck begging for attention.

How long are they?

“As...long...as they need to be.”

He smiles and kicks off his sweatpants before taking Hannibal’s cock in fully.

Hannibal hisses, grasping his hair, and Will feels the heat boil inside when the tentacles touch his wet willing hole.

He arches up to meet the first, and when the second thrusts into him he groans.

“Will…”

Please.

Hannibal grips hard on his hair as both tentacles thrust into him at once.

Will can’t hold back his second orgasm but the sound of his moans gets muffled by Hannibal spilling into his mouth. He coughs, trying to taste, but is pulled back gently as he struggles not to bliss out.

“Mielasis…”

“I love you,” Will sighs, “I…”

Hannibal kisses him, licking his own passion from Will’s tongue, and he can feel their skin both changing rapidly. He pulls back to touch Will’s face with both hands.

“Is your hunger satisfied?”

Will smiles. “No, but...it’s getting there.”

Hannibal laughs and kisses him again.

This is the life they could have alone, Will realizes, even with the babies. He wants this, all of this, and it's getting harder to wait.

Hannibal pulls back to frown at him. "Will?"

"I just want you," he whispers, "Not her, just...you. I can't…"

He sighs. "I know, Mielasis."

"It's taking too long," Will says, blinking back tears, "I…"

His stomach growls.

"You need sustenance."

Hannibal leaves the bed and Will stares down at his belly while he waits. "I'm getting bigger."

"I know," Hannibal says, handing him two slices of obviously cold pizza, "Do you want to heat them?"

He bites down on the first and sighs. "No, I'm good."

Hannibal touches his belly. "They're growing rapidly," he says, "That's a good sign."

Will frowns. "Have you...I mean...have you seen it? Someone pushing the eggs out, I mean."

He watches Hannibal's frown deepen. "My mother," Hannibal says, still petting over Will's baby bump, "I was there when she began to give birth to my siblings."

Will touches his hand. "Why did you only have a sister?"

Hannibal shakes his head. "My mother's eggs didn't fill correctly," he says, "But...I know ours have. I can feel them move inside you."

Will smiles. "I feel like I know them already, you know? It's only been like two weeks but...they feel like mine."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "I know, Mielasis, and I'm certain they can feel you too."

Will blinks back tears. "Yeah?"

"Oh yes."

He entwines their fingers together as he eats the last of his pizza slice. "I was scared at first, but...I want them, I really do."

Hannibal smiles. "I know, Will, and that makes me very happy to hear."

Will kisses him again. "We'll have to find some baby name books soon, and...I don't know what other things babies need."

“We’ll figure that out when we can, Will, I promise. Would you like the last piece?”

He shakes his head. “No, I’m...I think I’m good.”

Hannibal doesn’t take his hand away. “May I stay with you tonight?”

Will launches himself at him, almost knocking them off his bed, and Hannibal’s hands come around his waist. “You think I’m gonna let you leave?”

He smiles. “I didn’t want to assume.”

“Always assume, Dr. Lecter,” Will teases, “You wanna watch a movie?”

“Yes please.”

They watch two movies, one of which Hannibal nitpicks the entire time much to Will’ amusement.

“A real doctor wouldn’t perform surgery that way. He’s not even cutting correctly. Any doctor worth their education would---”

Will laughs. “He’s skinning his dick. I don’t exactly think it’s standard procedure.”

“Well,” Hannibal mumbles, “My observation still stands.”

Will gets sleepy again by the end of the second, and his constant yawns finally make Hannibal turn it off. “Hey, I was….”

“It’s time for sleeping, Will. Unnecessary Surgery can wait till our next movie viewing night.”

He watches Hannibal undo his tie, and even gently throw his shirt off the side of the bed so Will can lay his head on him.

“Goodnight, Will.”

“Mmm,” Will sighs, “Goodnight, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s hand comes to Will’s belly. “Goodnight, little ones,” he whispers.

The eggs move inside him and Will smiles. “They said goodnight too.”

He falls asleep with Hannibal’s scent surrounding him, and is more content than he’s ever been.

This summer is still the strangest of his entire life, but he wouldn’t trade it for anything.

Chapter 49

It's still dark outside when he wakes up the next morning alone, and he's not sure what woke him.

He grabs his phone to find no messages from Bev, no alarm, and buries his face into the pillow again to go back to sleep.

A noise makes him lift his head again, confused, and walk to the window to look outside.

The moonlight hits the water beautifully as he stares, and the temptation to go out there is heavy. He presses down on his belly and feels the tadpoles. "You heard that too, huh?"

There's no one out there, he'd see them if there was, and yet he feels like there is.

"Will?"

He turns to see Hannibal standing in his doorway still half dressed.

"I thought you went back to her."

Hannibal comes up and kisses him deeply, making Will's toes curl. "Why would I if I didn't have to?"

He smiles. "Mmm," he whispers, "Maybe I don't want to go back to sleep."

"I don't mind," Hannibal says, kissing him again as they move toward the bed, "What woke you?"

"I thought I heard something outside."

Hannibal stops, pulling his head back, and stares at Will with a frown. "You heard something?"

"Yeah, it was probably just raccoons or something outside."

"Will, have you not noticed that animals tend to stay away from this house? If something was outside, it was no animal."

"I…"

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "Please stay here."

"No!" Will hisses, "I'm not letting you go out there by yourself!"

He puts both hands on Will's cheeks. "*Please*, Mielasis. Stay here. You can watch for me at the window."

Will wants to protest again, biting at his lip in frustration, but nods once saying nothing.

Hannibal practically runs out of the room and Will rushes to the window to wait.

He has one hand at his belly and another over his chest as Hannibal emerges from the house to stalk the yard.

His first thought is that it might be Matt outside, peeking in Will's window, and he leans forward digging his claws into the window seat. What would he do if it was him? Would he get to Hannibal in time?

Will feels the eggs flutter against his hand and he blinks back tears.

"It'll be ok," he whispers, "It...it's gonna be fine."

Maybe there was no noise at all.

He might've just been hearing things.

Hannibal disappears and reappears in and out of his line of sight for the next twenty minutes eventually heading back for the house. Will runs down the hall and meets him just at the door. He hugs him tight, burying his face in Hannibal's neck.

"There was nothing," Hannibal says, kissing his cheek, "I'm all right."

Will doesn't move. "I know I heard something."

"You may have," Hannibal whispers, "But whomever it was left before I could find them."

"I...I heard it last night too," he says, "I should've said something."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "You didn't know, and I should've told you. There's...much I should tell you."

Will lifts his head. "Like what?"

He brushes the hair from Will's forehead. "Are you hungry?"

"Yeah."

"We should go for a boat ride, you and I."

Will frowns. "Right now?"

He nods. "What better time?"

"Are you about to tell me something terrible again because---"

Hannibal kisses him softly, brushing his fingers against Will's cheek as they part. "No, no, it's...there are things about...us...you probably should know."

Will's stomach hurts. "You're sure?"

"Yes, Will, it's...a heavy subject but not a bad one."

"Ok."

"I will make us something light so please go get changed for a swim."

Will moves to walk back to his bedroom and looks at him one more time.

The sad set to his shoulders is kinda scary, but Will pulls himself down the hall anyway to get this over with. Hannibal says it's not bad, whatever it is, and he believes him.

He grabs his cleanest pair of swim trunks from the laundry and puts them on fast before heading back toward the kitchen. Hannibal is flipping some eggs on the stove that have meat and spices in them.

"That looks familiar."

Hannibal smiles. "I've cooked protein scramble for you before."

Will touches his neck, remembering. "My first hickey."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "Yes."

"Hmm, it looks good."

"I've made us fresh squeezed orange juice to go with it."

"How long have you been up?"

"Long enough."

Will smiles and stretches up, which pulls his trunks down to expose his belly. He looks down and pats across his egg bump. "I'm bigger."

Hannibal looks at him. "Yes, I can see that."

"It hasn't even been two weeks yet."

"Four to six is the standard," Hannibal says, eyeing him appreciatively, "But I've only known one birth in my lifetime so I should not be the judge."

Will frowns. "You've never met anyone other than me?"

"No," Hannibal says, frowning as he turns off the burners, "And it's not from lack of trying."

He reaches up to grab some containers and begins to scoop up their breakfast into them little by little.

"I bet you were happy to smell me then."

Hannibal stops and looks at Will again, his gaze filled with affection and desire. “More than you could ever imagine.”

He blushes. “I can imagine plenty,” he teases, “And have when it comes to you.”

Hannibal opens another container as he smirks. “I remember.”

“That was so embarrassing, and you…”

He closes the second container and comes up to Will, pulling him close. “You looked beautiful in your ecstasy, Mielasis. Just beautiful.”

“Hannibal, I...we gotta get out of here.”

Hannibal puts up one finger. “Give me one more moment. I will meet you at the door.”

Will sighs and tears himself away from the kitchen to head for the door. He doesn’t even hear anything outside but still it’s not worth the risk to wait alone out there. Hannibal comes out of the kitchen carrying a bag and he takes Will’s hand.

“Shall we?”

He smiles and squeezes his hand. “We shall.”

They close the door behind them as they go, still hand in hand, and Will gets on the boat first breathing in the water around them.

“I could live on a boat I think,” he says, staring out, “Or underwater.”

“That’s good to know.”

He’s strapped in as the boat takes off, and the feel of being so close to the water even at night makes him feel better.

“I love this!” he yells, knowing Hannibal will hear.

They drive out as far as they can go, and Hannibal parks in their secret spot just as the sun hits the water.

“Perfect,” Will says, staring out, “Just beautiful.”

“Yes, you are.”

Will smiles at him, blushing. “Stop.”

Hannibal smiles. “Never.”

“So,” he says, reaching for Hannibal’s hands, “What do you want to tell me?”

Hannibal squeezes back and stares down at them. “The animals.”

“Yes?”

“I know you have an affinity for canines, and Matthew has one, so you know they don’t see a threat in us.”

“Yeah,” Will whispers, “Why are you even thinking about that?”

“Wild predator animals do not trust us, not for anything, as they can smell our superiority.”

Will smiles. “So I’m a big scary monster even to a bear?”

“Oh yes.”

“Good to know.”

“And you have said you would live in the water. That...is a possibility if it ever comes down to it.”

Will blinks. “Really?”

“We’re sea creatures, Mielasis,” Hannibal says, “If you can live without the internet and cellular phones then our family would do just fine on the water in our cave.”

“So a real last resort thing then,” he teases, “Cuz I mean...the internet...water…” he moves his hands up and down.

Hannibal smiles. “A very last resort, yes.”

“Anything else?”

“Mated pairs,” Hannibal says, his voice sounding strained, “Are very rare. Humans often view us as attractive, obviously, but a true mating is...it’s for life.”

“Hannibal, what---”

Hannibal kisses Will’s hands one by one before he looks up at him. “We’ve shared ourselves with each other in many ways, haven’t we?”

“Yes.”

“There will come a time when we’ll feel the need to complete our bond, and I just want you to know that we’ll change if we do.”

Will frowns. “What do you mean?”

He sighs. “I grew up the oldest in my family,” he whispers, “My mother struggled with loss my whole life as the humans around us were never around long. She and my father were mated, of course, and loved each other very much. But my father told me that when they mated they shared a lifespan. If we become truly mated, you would outlive those closest to you other than our children.”

“I guessed I’d live a long time anyway,” Will says, smiling, “When you told me how old you are. It’s a good thing, right? We can be together a long time.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, squeezing his hands, “I thought it a very good thing but I just wanted you to know that with mating your lifespan grows even more. Beverly and any humans you befriend will not be around forever.”

Will feels a tightness in his chest. “I guess I didn’t think of it that way.”

“Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I just...I mean...I’m sixteen and it feels like I’ve aged ten years in the past month.”

Hannibal pulls him closer. “Will…”

Will blinks back tears. “I’m fine, I just...it’s a long way away, right?”

“Yes.”

He sighs. “And what else comes with a true mating?”

“We would feel each other fully, in all ways. Share every touch, every burst of ecstasy, and every strength.”

“I’d get stronger then?”

“Yes.”

Will squeezes their hands together again, and drops the shift on his while Hannibal does the same.

“Will?”

“I love you,” he whispers, looking up through his lashes, “So much.”

“I love you,” Hannibal says, his eyes red, “More than anything.”

“So...let’s do it right now,” Will says, smiling through his tears, “What do we have to do?”

Hannibal kisses his hands again. “It’s a very involved ceremony involving the sharing of our bodies and the intake of...a shared kill.”

Will feels a rush of heat fill him at the words. “Oh.”

“I thought perhaps when it’s time to...end Leanne we would become true mates.”

He unbuckles his belt and sits in Hannibal’s lap. “Yes, I...yes. Why didn’t you tell me this sooner?”

“I didn’t want to ruin our happiness if you decided you didn’t wish to,” Hannibal says, “Will…”

Will hugs him. “Why would I say no?”

“I’m not sure,” Hannibal says, “But I wanted to tell you now that we're close again.”

He kisses Hannibal softly. “Thank you,” he whispers, “For telling me, for...I mean you were asking me, right?”

Hannibal smiles. “Would you like a formal request?”

Will gets up again and sits down, smiling. “Yes.”

He gets down on one knee and takes Will’s hand. “Would you become true mated to me, Will?”

Will grins. “Yes, I will.”

Hannibal kisses his hand, and he can see he’s struggling to hold his shift.

“Will…”

“I’m looking to get a little wet,” he hisses, his teeth heavy in his tongue, “Aren’t you?”

“Yes,” Hannibal growls.

Will jumps off the side of the boat just as Hannibal does the same. They speed off to the cave, rushing through one by one, and begin to paw at each other’s clothes. Will finds himself pressed gently against the rocks, his trunks pulled off with ease and tossed on the rocks before Hannibal thrusts inside him. He cries out, grabbing for him, and feels Hannibal’s tentacles grip his wrists as he’s fucked slow.

“Hannibal, please,” he whimpers, “Harder, I…”

Hannibal nips at his neck but doesn’t quicken his pace, taking his time and driving Will mad.

He grabs for himself but a tentacle wraps around his cock stroking while he’s held back.

Hannibal bites his neck as he rocks into him, groaning and growling with each thrust.

Will comes with a whimper, spilling into the water, and Hannibal bites down making him groan.

“Harder,” he whines, “Ha…”

He bites down so hard Will knows he’s gonna bleed but he does care, thrusting back until Hannibal finally growls his release spilling inside him. Hannibal holds him after, licking at the wound, and nuzzles Will’s neck.

“We’re getting monster married,” Will laughs, “I can’t wait.”

“Neither can I.”

“I love you,” Will sighs, “I really, really do.”

“Will...I live and breathe for you. I...I am so...I love you more than anyone has ever loved.”

Will smiles back at him. “How can I ever top that now?”

Hannibal kisses him again. “You’ll think of something.”

They lay against the rocks for a moment, though Hannibal turns so Will can get comfortable, and bask in the afterglow.

“The canine,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his neck.

“Uh...what?”

“Dogs,” he says, “You enjoy them.”

“Yeah, so?”

“Would you like one?”

He smiles back at him. “You really are going for it all this morning, huh?”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Would you?”

Will licks his lips. “I...yeah, I mean...I love dogs.”

“Perhaps when all this is over that will be my gift to you.”

“We have to share gifts too?”

“It’s not required, but it’s...my parents made each other things. My father bound a book of poetry for her, and she painted him something.”

Will frowns. “I don’t even have a job, or…”

He kisses his cheek. “Will, you already have many gifts you’re carrying for me.”

“Oh.”

Hannibal puts his hand over Will’s belly. “And there’s nothing else that would make me happier than to receive them.”

Will kisses him again. “Well then that’s one worry down.”

They press their foreheads together.

“I really do wish we could stay.”

“Perhaps someday.”

Will sighs as his stomach growls.

“Time for breakfast?”

“I guess so.”

They swim back through one by one, and come to the boat for lunch. Will is so happy he feels like he might burst and neither of them can stop smiling as they eat. They lay together after breakfast and stare up at the sun.

“I’m so happy,” Will sighs, as Hannibal runs fingers through his hair.

“As am I.”

His eyes start to feel heavy. “I’m just...gonna rest my eyes.”

“You woke rather early, so perhaps it’s best.”

Will doesn’t remember falling asleep but wakes up to Leanne’s voice echoing from far away. He blinks, lifting his head. “Is that…?”

Hannibal sighs. “Yes, she’s apparently awake and as I haven’t answered my phone she’s going to yell.”

He pulls out his phone and puts it to his ear. “Hello Leanne.”

Will can hear her yelling on the other end and kisses Hannibal’s neck in support.

“Yes, yes, yes. We decided to go for a morning swim. Yes, I suppose. Yes. We’ll be back this afternoon. Yes. Yes. Goodbye.”

He ends the call and sighs deeply. “Leanne says hello.”

Will laughs. “So much for her sweet routine.”

Hannibal pulls him closer. “She was aghast at no breakfast made for her when she woke, and is now lamenting how we’re leaving her out of everything.”

Will kisses his cheek. “Why wouldn’t we?”

Hannibal nuzzles back, and they move closer still as the eggs flutter between them.

“We have to go back?”

“Not yet.”

Will sighs happily and rests his head on Hannibal’s shoulder. “Good.”

He feels Hannibal touch his belly again.

“They’re happy too.”

Will smiles. “One big happy family...and Leanne.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “Not for much longer.”

Will smiles at him. “Maybe that can be your monster wedding gift to me too.”

He smiles back and caresses Will’s cheek. “And yours to me.”

Will hums and Hannibal does the same, kissing him again.

“Mine,” Will whispers, his teeth heavy in his mouth.

“All yours,” Hannibal says, his eyes red, “Always yours.”

Will’s chest aches as he stares up at Hannibal, his vision turning crimson.

“I can’t wait to get monster married.”

“Neither can I.”

Chapter 50

They spend another hour on the boat, just basking in each other's presence, and before long Will knows it's got to end.

"Will…"

"It's fine," he sighs, kissing him again, "The fun can't last forever."

Hannibal touches his cheek. "It will," he says, "I promise you."

He can't help the tinge of sadness as he gets back in his seat, and doesn't bother to stop to even look at Leanne when he comes inside though she calls out to him. Will locks his door and lays on his bed.

Every single time they have to be apart again is worse than the last.

Will puts two hands on his baby bump, bigger now than ever it seems, and knows soon it's gonna be hard to explain away.

Leanne might be horrible, heartless, and a bad mom but she wasn't completely foolish. She knew something was going on no matter how many times they kept lying to her. He closes his eyes and tries to calm down the pain in his belly but a buzz from his phone makes him grab for it.

"Hello?"

"Did you forget you were supposed to call me?"

Will opens his eyes. *“Dad.”*

“Yeah, ***Dad .*** *I’ve been worried, son. Are things...ok?”*

“I...yeah, it’s better.”

There’s a pause. *“Define better.”*

“I dunno, Dad. I just...I don’t want to leave.”

“Just a few days ago you were in tears and now it’s just a-ok?”

“You said I had two weeks.”

“Yeah, Kid, but...I really do think I need to come down there. Somethin’ don’t feel right. None of this has felt any kinda right since the start.”

Will sighs. *“I’m ok, Dad. Really, I’m ok.”*

“You...been swimming?”

He rubs his belly. *“A lot, yeah.”*

“And you’re ok in the water?”

“Dad,” he whispers, *“What is it that you’re not telling me?”*

There was another pause. *"Will…"*

"You've been saying cryptic shit since this all started and you...I know you don't want to tell me over the phone but---"

"Son," he sighs, *"There's a lot of shit that I did to keep you away from that woman. A lot of shit. When she came back so sudden it felt...like wounds were ripped open all over again. But I had to do it, cuz...I couldn't lose you, Kid."*

Will's eyes fill with tears. *"Dad…"*

"You're my son, Will, and I love you so goddamn much. There ain't nothin' you could tell me that would change that."

He wipes his face. *"A lot of stuff's been happening that I…I can't tell you either but I want to, I...Dad…"*

"Will, I was there to change your diapers. You're gonna tell me what's going on or I'm gonna come there and find out."

"Just a few more weeks," Will says, his voice shaking, *"I just need more time."*

"Are you safe, son?"

He smiles. *"Yeah, Dad. I'm safe."*

"Okay, Kid. I believe you. But...I need you to do something for me."

He frowns. *"Okay."*

“Don’t be alone with her,” he says, *“Never be alone with her.”*

Will rubs his belly. *“I...I won’t.”*

“I love you, Kid.”

“I love you too.”

He ends the call and wipes at his eyes, confused more than ever about the stuff his father said.

It was more than obvious Michael Graham knew Will’s secret and had kept it from him for a very long time. Why he didn’t say anything to him Will didn’t know, and part of him didn’t want to find out.

The more he learned about himself things always seemed to get worse before they got better.

Right now despite Bev pushing him away things were good, great even, though they could be better if Leanne were out of the picture.

Will rubs at the marks on his neck, fading now, and the happy feeling that usually comes with touching them doesn’t happen.

He sighs.

A loud yell makes him turn around fast, and he runs out into the hallway only to hear a loud thump.

“WHY WON’T YOU LET ME LOVE YOU?”

Will walks slowly down the hall, teeth heavy in his mouth, and hears Hannibal growl.

“Calm yourself, Leanne.”

“ALL I WANT TO DO IS LOVE YOU! Why do you keep pushing me away? What did I do? Is...is it him?”

He pauses at the door to the dining room.

“Leanne…”

“I’ve seen you,” she says, her voice rising again, “I’ve SEEN YOU!”

Will puts his hand on the door and tries to calm down the anger that rises up in him.

“You have no idea of what you speak, Leanne, not any ounce of understanding.”

“I’m having your baby,” she says, letting out a sob, “We can be a family, Hanni. We…”

“You are NOT having a child, Leanne. Your advanced age is…”

She screams just as Will opens the door, and he pushes out all his hate at once.

Leanne stumbles, holding her mouth, and rushes out of the dining room just as Will nearly collapses to the ground. Hannibal catches him before he hits the floor, and he leans on him

with a sigh. “Sorry, I...I couldn’t keep listening.”

“You should not have risked yourself,” Hannibal scolds, helping him walk, “I had things under control.”

“She’s un...stable,” Will huffs out, barely able to keep his eyes open, “And you refuse to get rid of her right now. What else were you gonna do?”

“She’s harmless, Will.”

Will laughs, falling into him more, and Hannibal lifts him up into his arms.

“She’s gonna see,” he mumbles, nuzzling his neck.

“I don’t care.”

He’s barely awake as Hannibal sets him into bed, and smiles up at him.

“Why...the scream?”

“I refused her advances.”

Will laughs. “I...would...scr..eam..too.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “You’d never have to.”

He fades so fast he can’t respond to that, but hours later wakes up lying against Hannibal’s chest.

“What time is it?”

“Nearly two,” Hannibal whispers, running fingers through his hair.

“I slept...shit...four hours?”

“You exhausted yourself.”

Will sighs. “Why is that even my power if it’s also a weakness?”

“I’m unsure.”

“It’s not even worth using if it’s gonna make me do that.”

“You should refrain,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, “At least until the eggs are out.”

“Then Leanne better leave you the fuck alone.”

“Will, I’m perfectly capable of dealing with Leanne.”

Will lifts his head. “You shouldn’t have to, ok? I...we’re gonna be monster married. I want to help sometimes.”

Hannibal runs a hand down his cheek and smiles. “Are you my protector then?”

“Well, aren’t you mine?”

“Always.”

He kisses him softly. “Is she asleep?”

“Yes, and well fed.”

Will frowns. “What does that mean?”

“I thought perhaps if I fed her a large meal before sedation she’d sleep longer.”

“Oh.”

“What did you think it meant?”

“I don’t know, that’s why I asked!”

Hannibal smiles. “Are you hungry?”

Will moves to sit up more and straddles his lap with a grin. “Starving.”

“Will…”

He leans in to kiss him when the doorbell rings.

They both pause.

Will sees the curtains have been drawn and stands to peek out. He doesn't recognize the car.

"Who is it?"

"I dunno, it's…I think…"

Someone walks a bit away from the door and his heart beats faster as he takes off running when he realizes who it is.

"Will, what's…"

Bev! It's Bev!

He opens the door just as Bev has her hand up to knock.

They stare at each other.

"H...hi."

She doesn't smile. "Hey."

"I didn't think you'd come over so soon."

Bev shrugs. “Neither did I.”

“Do you want to come in or…?”

“Can you come outside?” she asks, then looks behind him, “We won’t go far.”

Will turns to see Hannibal standing there.

“Yes, that’s fine.”

He follows Bev out, noticing the car again, and as they sit down outside on the porch he notices that there’s two people sitting in the front seats.

“They’re terrified to leave me alone,” Bev says, “I mean, I get it, but it’s like...where am I going to go?”

Will waves and her parents wave back.

“Don’t encourage them.”

He smiles. “They love you,” he says, his voice shaking as he turns to her, “I love you, you know that right?”

Bev smiles. “I know, Will. I just...it’s hard. I really liked her.”

Will looks down so her parents won’t see him cry. “I know you did.”

“And I’m not mad at you, I’m...a little mad at me.”

“What?”

Bev sniffles, wiping her eyes. “I keep thinking that maybe she picked me to get to you, and...if that’s true...then...all of it was a lie. All of it. And I feel *so stupid* because I believed her. I…”

Will hugs her tight and she buries her face against his neck.

He rubs her back. “You don’t know what was going on in her head, Bev, and if she was using you then...I don’t know. She was being abused, we know that, and that kind of abuse...can fuck someone up in a lot of ways. You were good to her when you could be, and I’m sure she...she…”

Bev lifts her head, tears streaming down her face, and smiles. “My first girlfriend turned out to be a monster hunter, and your sugar monster is super good at covering up crimes. Like...insanely good. We really do know how to pick ‘em.”

Will presses his forehead to hers and smiles. “I think I got a good one though,” he whispers, “I really do.”

She puts her hands on his shoulders. “If you say so.”

He leans back and looks behind him. “Are they gonna stay the whole time?”

“Probably.”

Will turns to her again. “You wanna come inside for a late lunch?”

Bev shakes her head. “I dunno if I...I’m not sure I can handle watching the two of you be all lovey dovey right now.”

He frowns. “Oh.”

She takes his hand and squeezes. “But...I’ll get there. I will.Just in time for the tadpoles.”

“You don’t have to push yourself, Bev. I get it, ok?”

Bev takes his other hand. “You’re my best friend, Will. I want to be here for you.”

Will smiles. “You didn’t have to come over,” he whispers, “You could’ve just...called.”

She looks back at the house and then him with a smile. “Did I interrupt something?”

“No,” he lies, blushing, “I just…”

Bev pulls him into another hug and squeezes tight. “I love how bad a liar you are,” she sighs.

Will blushes harder. “I am not.”

“You are,” she says, moving back, “But it’s ok.”

“Bev…you really didn’t have to come.”

She lays against him. “Yeah, I did,” she whispers, “I had to get that image out of my head of you...with her. I had to see you as you are, and I couldn’t do that sitting in my room crying all

day.”

Will wraps his arm around her. “I did it to protect us.”

“I know, Will.”

“I’d...do it again,” he confesses, tears filling his eyes, “To protect Hannibal...or you.”

Bev takes his hand. “I know, Will, I…” her voice breaks, “I know.”

“You really don’t hate me?”

“No.”

He lets out a breath he didn’t realize he’d been holding. “Ok.”

“But,” she says, standing again, “I can’t stay. I...I’ll call you, ok?”

“Okay,” Will says, his heart hurting as she backs away, “Bev, I…”

She smiles. “I know.”

He watches her get into the car just before her parents drive away, and sees the sun is about to go down any minute. The reflection off the lake makes him ache to be in the water again.

“Fuck,” he whispers, sniffling as he wipes his face.

Will hears the door open behind him just before Hannibal sits down, and he leans against him.

“She didn’t stay.”

“No,” Will whispers, “It’s...hard.”

“Are you alright?”

“I’m...it’s hard,” he says, his voice shaking, “Because this is gonna put a wedge between us, I don’t care what she says, and...I was close to her first, you know? That sounds sort of messed up to say but she was mine first. Abigail didn’t…”

Hannibal pulls him in closer. “It’s not messed up, Will,” he whispers, “You love her, and don’t wish to have things change. It’s not selfish or wrong to be mad at someone who died.”

“Who I killed,” Will says, “Someone I killed.”

Hannibal lifts his chin and they stare at each other. “That makes no difference.”

Will feels a tear fall down his cheek. “I…”

A rustling sound makes them both pause, and look around at the source.

“You heard it?” Will asks.

“Yes.”

Neither of them move, waiting to hear it again, and Will feels his claws come out in anticipation.

The rustling noise starts again, and then suddenly the source comes running out at them.

It's Seaweed.

Will blinks as the dog, oddly still, stops to stare at them.

"Is that...his animal?"

"Yeah," Will says, "I…"

"Get inside, Will."

"What?"

"Get...in...side," Hannibal snarls, "Please."

"I can catch him," Will says, anxious now, "I…"

He grabs Will and turns him, his eyes red and skin almost blue. "Please, Will. It's…this...it may be a trap, or a diversion."

"Hannibal, don't," he hisses, "It's a dog, he...he's not gonna hurt me."

Hannibal growls, pulling Will in close to him again, and Will can see Seaweed is still just sitting there wagging his tail.

“Please,” he whispers, “Go inside.”

Will forces himself to go, tears filling his eyes, and closes the door behind him just as he runs to the window in his room. He can see Hannibal walk up to the dog, hands out, and before he can do anything Seaweed runs off into the trees. Will expects Hannibal to follow but instead he turns and heads back inside.

He runs back to the door as Hannibal is turning every lock and deadbolt they have.

“You’re just gonna leave him out there?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, growling, “I am.”

“We can call the number! He’ll come get the dog!”

“Will….”

“That poor dog didn’t---”

Hannibal grabs Will and smashes their mouths together so fast he barely has time to think. He groans, digging his nails into Hannibal’s neck, and they fall back onto the couch losing pieces of clothes in record time. He can’t resist him, not now, and before long he’s kissing him again riding his cock while he drips from desire.

All thought is gone, only they remain, and when he comes Hannibal bites into his neck while Will does the same. They collapse faster than they ever have before, and Hannibal licks his wound while Will sighs.

“That was...an underhanded thing to do,” he mumbles, nuzzling his neck.

“I would do it again,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his mark.

“Hannibal…”

He wraps his arms around Will tight. “Put the animal out of your mind, Will. Please.”

Will sighs just as Hannibal rolls them to the side, and pulls out of him. He closes his eyes.

“Okay.”

But he can’t really keep Seaweed out of his mind, not really, and knows if he sees the dog again he won’t let him go.

No matter what Hannibal says, next time he’s going after him.

Chapter 51

Kisses to his stomach rouse him from a troubled sleep the next morning.

He sighs, petting Hannibal's hair, and smiles down at him barely half awake. "Good morning."

Hannibal lays his head on Will's belly, bigger now, and rubs his palm on the bump. "Good morning."

"How're the tadpoles?"

"Swimming excitedly."

Will reaches for him. "As they should be."

Hannibal entwines their fingers and kisses Will's hand. "Did you sleep well?"

He frowns. "Not really."

"Will…"

"It was a defenseless dog, Hannibal. You could've grabbed and brought him in without any trouble."

"You honestly think that dog being loose is not for you?"

Will frowns. “I...people lose their dogs all the time.”

“Yes but this particular dog,” Hannibal sighs, sitting up now and coming to lay beside him, “Has been for you from the start.”

“You don’t know that.”

He touches Will’s cheek. “Will,” he whispers, “I obsessively followed your social media accounts for *months* after I found you on the internet. I researched everything you enjoyed down to your favorite colors. I wanted you to be happy here and...felt that was the best way to be sure.”

“That doesn’t mean Matt did too,” WIll mumbles, chewing on his lip, “I mean...not everyone is as...weird...as you.”

“But it could still be a possibility, yes?”

Will sighs. “I...I guess maybe it could be.”

“I promise that if we are in a situation where we can help save the dog next time,” Hannibal says, pulling him closer, “We will.”

He smiles with his face buried against Hannibal’s neck. “Thank you.”

“I hate to see you distraught.”

“I know.”

“Everything I do is for you,” Hannibal whispers, “You know that.”

Will lifts his head and smiles. “You’ve got me already.”

“But we are not yet true mated.”

“Well,” Will says, pushing Hannibal down as he moves to straddle him, “That’s a sure thing too.”

Hannibal’s hands come up his legs and come to rest at his baby bump.

“That does not make me want to please you any less knowing I have your heart already.”

Will puts his hands over Hannibal’s and entwines their fingers. He rocks forward and they both sigh. “Hannibal…”

“Can you be silent, Mielasis?” Hannibal teases, “And let me please you?”

He nods, biting his lip, and sits up letting Hannibal peel his boxers off. Slick wetness begins to pour down Will’s ass as he watches Hannibal do the same, and he puts a hand over his mouth as he lowers himself down onto him. Hard thrusts up meet Will movement down, hitting his inner pleasure so perfectly he can hardly control his whimpers. Hannibal’s shift falls enough for Will to see his scales, and his cock grows longer with each undulation.

“Will...oh...Will…”

Will bends down, capturing his mouth, and they muffle each other’s moans as the inferno building inside them both comes to boil. Hannibal touches him once and he’s gone, spilling messily between them, and Hannibal thrusts twice more before he’s flooding Will’s hole with his release. They don’t stop moving until the last ounce of pleasure is taken, and Will collapses onto his chest panting loudly.

Hannibal runs fingers through his hair. “That…”

He grabs his hand and sighs happily. “We’re good at that.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says softly, “We are.”

“Now I’m messy.”

“We can go for a swim?”

Will moves so he can look up at him. “Is that gonna clean me up?”

Hannibal rubs his back. “Perhaps not but...would you like to?”

He sighs and hugs him tight. “Later.”

“Our shared passion will be uncomfortable if it’s left to dry.”

“So?”

Hannibal rolls them onto their side and Will moves to be spooned. He kisses the back of his neck, and teases his teeth at Will’s bite marks. “So...we should cleanse ourselves.”

“Mmm,” Will sighs, pushing back against him, “Not yet.”

They lay there long enough for Will to begin to feel sleepy again, and when he finally wakes up he knows he’s clean even before he looks down. Hannibal is still at his back, still naked,

and yet Will knows.

“You couldn’t wait?”

“I didn’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“Mmmm….”

“Breakfast is warming in the oven when you’re ready.”

He rolls over to smile at him. “You really were busy.”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Yes.”

“Is Leanne awake?”

“She is,,,..incapacitated.”

“Was she awake?”

“Yes. I fed her breakfast, gave her attention, and sent her back to bed.”

Will laughs. “Sounds like something you’d do with a pet, not a person.”

“Do you care?”

“Not really,” Will yawns, stretching his arms out, “I’m ready for it to be over.”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Soon.”

He frowns. “I know.”

“Are you hungry?”

Will touches his belly and feels the eggs flutter against his hand. “I think they are more than me. Aren’t you?” he says, looking down.

The eggs flutter again at his voice and he smiles.

“They’re active this morning, aren’t you little tadpoles?”

“It makes me very happy to see you bonding with them so soon.”

He smiles at him. “You thought I wouldn’t?”

“I...wasn’t sure,” Hannibal whispers, touching Will’s belly again, “I thought perhaps your anger at me would be addressed to our offspring.”

“They kept me going,” Will says, entwining their fingers, “Though I forgave you probably faster than I should’ve.”

“I’m very grateful.”

Will leans in to kiss him softly. “So am I.”

Hannibal presses his forehead to Will’s and sighs. “I suppose we should get dressed.”

“Do we have to?”

“No,” Hannibal says, “But you do need some water on your skin today other than the wet washcloth I used.”

“I could use a swim.”

He kisses him again. “After breakfast.”

“We can have naked breakfast, can’t we?”

Hannibal smiles. “I suppose, though if Leanne wakes she may question my motives walking naked through the kitchen.”

Will sneers. “Clothes then,” he says, squeezing his hand, “I don’t want her seeing you naked.”

“Will…”

“I’m gonna get dressed,” Will mumbles, climbing out of bed.

He hates the insecurity that even thinking about Hannibal naked around his mother brings, and the tears that sting his eyes as he looks for clothes feel so childish. Hannibal is his, he knows that, but the time he was hers wasn’t that long ago.

Will grabs his last clean pair of trunks and puts them on fast, the tightness around his bump already noticeable. He moves to find a shirt when Hannibal wraps his arms around him.

“I am yours, Mielasis,” he whispers, kissing Will’s bite mark, “I will remind you every second of every day if I must.”

“I know, I do know, but just having her nearby thinking otherwise gets harder everyday.”

Hannibal sighs. “I’m sorry.”

Will spins himself around and kisses him. “You’ll make it up to me,” he says, smiling.

“For the rest of our lives,” Hannibal says, kissing him again.

He steps back and turns away from him again. “I know.”

They get dressed silently after, though Will feels Hannibal watching him, and when he’s finished he turns to see him putting a shirt on over purple swim trunks.

“I don’t think there’s a color you *don’t* look good in,” he teases, heading into the hallway.

“Thank you, Mielasis,” Hannibal says, following, “You look quite handsome yourself.”

Will can’t help but blush. “Thank you.”

The dining room table is already set when they enter the room and Will’s stomach growls even before he sits down.

“I will return,” Hannibal promises, leaving him alone.

He looks around the dining room when he’s alone, taking everything in, and realizes that he’s never seen a single thing in the house related to Hannibal’s family. They were alive hundreds of years ago so it’s not a surprise, but it makes him frown.

Does he have anything left?

Hannibal returns with their plates, and stops in the doorway. “What’s wrong?”

Will shakes his head. “Nothing.”

He walks over and sets Will’s plate down before doing the same to his own. “No, there is something. Your scent has changed.”

Will stares down at the food on his plate: sausage, french toast, and fresh fruit; and frowns. “I was just...thinking about your family. There’s...nothing here that is *you* , you know? Like a picture, or even just...I dunno. Just anything.”

Hannibal smiles and reaches for Will’s hand. “And that saddened you?”

“Don’t laugh at me,” Will mumbles, trying to pull his hand back.

Hannibal held on tight. “I was not, Will. It just made me happy to know you cared for such things. I *do* have family heirlooms but they’re not here. Leanne would see nothing beyond their monetary value, and I didn’t want her to see them.”

“Can I see?”

“Of course, Mielasis. They are for your eyes only. I’ll take you to them.”

Will smiles. “Where do you have them hidden?”

“You’ll see.”

He took a bite of french toast and sighed happily. “God this is so good.”

“Thank you.”

“Honestly, if you ever want to quit being a doctor you can just open a restaurant somewhere.”

“I’ll take that under advisement for my future endeavors.”

Will smiles. “Now I *know* you’re laughing at me.”

Hannibal smiles back. “Perhaps a bit.”

“I’ll allow it.”

They don’t let go of each other throughout breakfast, and head for the lake right after. Will should be getting sick of this routine but it’s comforting in the best kind of way.

The cool water on his skin makes him shiver as he swims and they race for the cave meeting outside to kiss in their true skin. No words are spoken, just touch and taste, which makes Will eager for more.

So he goes through first, and comes up laughing only to stare wide eyed at the walls.

“Will, what’s---”

There’s one word smeared in blood on the cave walls that leaves chills down his spine.

SOON.

Hannibal’s claws dig into Will’s shoulders, as tears run down his cheeks.

“This...this was *ours* ,” Will growls, “It…”

“Will…”

He throws water at the word and watches it smear down as it washes away. Hannibal holds him tight and bites into his neck hard making him fall back into his arms.

“You are *mine* , Mielasis. No one else’s,” he hisses, “MINE.”

“Hannibal, I…”

Hannibal turns him around and Will’s vision is red as he touches his cheeks. “I love you, Will. Do you hear me?”

“He’s taunting us,” Will whispers, “If...if it *is* him then...maybe...we need to get rid of him. Maybe...maybe…”

He wipes the tears from Will's cheeks. "I will tear his head from his body for hurting you this way."

"I want to go with you," Will says, his voice shaking, "I don't...I don't want you to go alone, and…"

Hannibal hugs Will to his chest and nuzzles his cheek. "If anything were to happen…"

"I got through Hobbs, remember?" Will says, "I can do this."

"We need to plan," Hannibal whispers, "Hobbs had the advantage when he took Beverly and we cannot let him think he's upset us with this obvious attempt at fear. We need to plan."

Will nods. "Ok."

Hannibal's scaled hand rubs at Will's back. "This is still ours, Will. No intruder can take that away."

He closes his eyes and breathes him in. "I just…I…"

"I know, Mielasis, I know. Do you wish to go?"

"No, just...hold me."

"As you wish."

They settle against the rocks, kissing and touching while Will calms down, and the glow from the rock makes Will feel a little better. He runs his webbed hands over it while Hannibal marks him all over.

“The place where your family stuff is…”

“Yes?”

“Can we go there?”

Hannibal pulls back and smiles. “We may need the boat as it would be a long swim.”

Will nods as Hannibal wipes the tears from his cheeks. “Ok. I want to go, I...I need to go.”

“Then we shall.”

They leave the cave and head for the house again side by side. Will loves swimming with Hannibal, and seeing him in his other skin makes it even better.

He hates the initial shock of leaving the water and hugs himself while they walk toward the boat.

“Are you cold?”

“No, I’m fine.”

“We can get some towels inside.”

Will smiles. “I’m fine, Hannibal.”

“Alright.”

He gets on the boat first and starts to buckle in just as Hannibal does the same.

“Is this place another secret cave or….?”

“You’ll see, Will.”

“You can’t just tell me?”

“I could, but seeing your face the first time will be worth keeping it to myself.”

Will laughs.

He goes to start the boat and click happens but nothing else.

“Um…?”

Hannibal looks at the dashboard. “Oh, I suppose I forgot to refill the gas tank.”

“A little important.”

“We’ve used the boat so many times but I honestly think of nothing but you when I’m inside it.”

He grins. “Got some in the garage?”

Hannibal frowns and undoes his seatbelt. “I believe so.”

“I’ll wait here.”

“No, I think it best if you come with me.”

Will points to the shed not far from the house. “It’s right there.”

“Will…”

He sighs. “Fine.”

They walk the shed together and Will lingers by the open door. His back hurts a little and he rubs at it.

“I think it’s somewhere in…”

Will doesn’t listen to him, lost in watching a dragonfly buzz up onto the edge of the roof, and he smiles reaching out just as a noise catches his attention.

“I’m sorry, Will. Just give me a moment.”

“It’s fine.”

“I’ll just be…”

He can see something rustling, and looks at Hannibal who’s occupied in the shed.

It might be the dog.

Or...it was a trap.

Will turns again just in time to see Seaweed dash out and back into the bush at the back of the house.

It’s not far.

Not at all.

He walks along the shed, heart beating wildly in his chest, and is nearly at the bush when he hears something like nails on a chalkboard. The shed is shaking, and Hannibal is yelling.

“WILL!”

Will turns just as something touches the back of his neck.

And then----darkness.

Chapter 52

Will fights to gain consciousness even though he feels fuzzy, his eyes barely opening as he stares into the wild green eyes of Matthew Brown. He can't seem to move and tears fill his eyes as Matt comes closer breathing him in.

"Oh you smell so *good* ! Fuck I've been waiting for this!"

His growl is weak as Matt moves to touch him, and Will snaps his teeth but still can't move.

"You're so cute," Matt whispers, smiling down at him, "Just so cute, thinking you have an upper hand here. You can't move, Will. Not till it wears off."

Matt turns his head and moves his hand toward Will's belly. Will tries desperately to move but Matt puts a hand over his baby bump.

Can you hear me?

We're gonna be ok.

"You know," Matt says, leaning his head down on Will's belly, "They'll bond to me once they're hatched. Yeah, there's a risk that they'll latch onto you, but….I won't let that happen."

He opens his mouth to scream but it comes out weak, and before he can do anything in walks Seaweed. Matt picks the dog up in his hands and pets him. "See, buddy? I told you he'd be here soon."

Will glares at him, tears still falling, and Matt puts his hand on the dog's neck.

“Will’s gonna be good for us, though, isn’t he? Cuz he doesn’t want to see *anything* happen to you.”

He feels his eyes get heavy again and fights losing consciousness but loses fast to darkness again.

He wakes up super thirsty but his body feels more awake than it did before. Matt is still in the room but he’s got a glass of water in his hand.

“You gonna be good for me, Will?”

Will growls, louder now, and Matt doesn’t move.

“No, huh? It’s been two days. I'm sure the eggs are thirsty.”

“You...re...ly...ing.”

Matt smiles. “He can’t find you, Will. He won’t find us. You won’t last long without water, though...if you’re good...I have another place you can sleep.”

Will sits up slowly, his head hurting, and doesn’t move. He doesn’t say a word, or even growl for what feels like ages until Matt comes over with the glass. He takes it, hating himself for the weakness, and drinks it so fast he starts to choke.

“Hey, hey,” Matt says, “Slow down. There’s more where that came from.”

He takes a deep breath, his stomach hurting, and finishes the rest slow.

“There’s a good boy.”

“I’m not your boy.”

Matt laughs. “Yeah, probably not. He’s got you, huh? I thought...for a while...I might be able to but when you got pregnant so soon I gave up on it.”

Will resists the urge to throw the glass at him but sets it down instead before Matt takes it. He backs away and leans against the wall. “I will *never* be yours.”

He sighs and grips the back of his own neck smiling still. “Oh, I know. That’s not what this is about.”

“What?”

Matt heads for the door and Will jumps up but stumbles almost falling back onto the bed.

“I’ll tell you later,” Matt teases, “And I’ll bring food.”

He shuts the door and Will screams so loud his throat hurts.

Hannibal has to hear him.

He’s heard him before, right?

Will closes his eyes, breathing in deep, and letting out all the air slowly. He puts both hands on his belly. “You ok in there?”

The eggs don’t flutter and Will’s eyes fill with tears.

“Hey, I’m...I’m talking to you.”

He presses down and lets out a sob. “Please, just…”

The weak flutter across his palm makes him laugh as tears fall down his cheeks.

“We got this,” he whispers, rubbing his bump, “We...we just have to...wait a little longer. Hannibal is coming. He...he won’t leave us.”

Will looks around the small room he’s locked in and takes in everything.

It’s smaller than his room at the house and empty of anything other than the bed, which is nothing but a box frame. There’s no headboard, one pillow, and the blanket is threadbare.

This doesn’t look like a room he’s meant to stay in long.

He has very few options here.

Will stares at the locked door and drops shift to his blue clawed hand. If Matt came near him again he could attack him, claw at his eyes until they bleed down his face, and run to the first exit screaming for help.

But that might not kill him.

He could use his power and get him sick, but then he’d pass out. Matt might wake up before him and drug him up again. WIll pats his belly.

He couldn’t do that to the eggs again.

Will sighs.

Or he could play along, get Matt to tell him what he was gonna do and try to make him think he could be won over. It would be hard, he knew, but it might keep him alive.

He lays back down and waits for Matt to come back again.

Will begins to count in his head.

One, two…

He doesn’t come until Will hits one thousand and sixty four, carrying a plastic bag along with something that smells like fish on a paper plate.

“You hungry?”

“Y...yeah.”

Matt holds up the plastic bag and pulls out a bottle of water. “See? I told you I’d bring food.”

He doesn’t come up to WIll right away and stays a few steps back but sets everything down on the table.

“Thank you,” Will says, his voice shaking as he opens a water.

Will drinks the water down slowly, though he's thirstier than he's ever been, and when he sets the empty bottle down Matt smiles. "Feel better?"

"Yes."

"Good! We gotta keep 'em wet," he laughs, "I still remember how my sister got so sick before she died because I didn't…"

Will freezes. "Sister?"

Matt laughs and sits on the floor. "Nevermind, just eat up."

He takes a bite of what tastes like a fish sandwich, waiting to feel sleepy again after he swallows, but after a minute nothing happens.

"You think I drugged it?"

Will opens a second water. "You drugged me the first time."

"Well that time I had to," Matt says, "How else would I have gotten you away? I don't even know what kinda stuff you can do."

He forces himself not to cry. "You...you didn't hurt him?"

"Hannibal?" Matt laughs, "No way! I can't kill him yet. *They* need him!"

Will's hand rests over his belly. "The eggs."

“Yep,” Matt sighs, “This whole thing has been a complicated operation, let me tell you. I had to scare you into getting closer until you mated, then push you again so the eggs would stick around, and now I have to keep you apart long enough to get the eggs before I kill you *but* I have to keep *him* alive or they won’t last. This father business is *stressful* !”

Will’s stomach hurt so hard he winced. “I need him *,* ” he whispers, “I...I won’t last without him. I…”

Matt shakes his head. “Nope! I know how it works! You think you’re my first?”

He started shaking as he took another drink, not hungry anymore but knowing he had to eat.

“Your mate really didn’t tell you much, did he? I mean, he’s *way* older than me so I thought he would but…”

Will sets the water bottle down. “Why don’t you tell me then?”

Matt tilts his head to the side and his eyes glow that unnatural green that Will had been sure was a trick of the light once upon a time. “What fun is telling you everything so fast?”

“You said it’s been two days.”

“Yeah, so?”

“So tell me.”

“Tell you what, Will?”

Will drops shift and holds up his blue hand. “Why is my skin blue and yours is green?”

Matt shakes his head. “Clever, clever, clever.”

“Well?”

He drops shift and holds up his green hand. “When did you know it was me?”

“I didn’t,” he whispers, his voice shaking, “ *He* did.”

“Makes sense,” Matt says, holding up his other hand.

“Well?”

“I’m green,” he whispers, his jaw tightening, “Because I can’t...I’m not…” he growls and stands up again.

“Can’t what?”

Matt stares down at his hands. “Breed,” he hisses, looking up at Will.

“That’s...why you didn’t…”

“I couldn’t,” Matt finishes, pacing, “I...my dad used to tell me I was useless because I wouldn’t pass on our blood like my brothers. Even my sister...she wouldn’t last. I tried to keep her here but she...she was weak and didn’t carry hers long enough.”

Will can’t stop the tears. “So you’re...gonna take mine.”

“I’ll be a good dad,” he says, coming closer now, “I...I’ll be good. I can *be* good! I…”

He lets out a shaky breath and picks up the rest of his sandwich to finish. Matt doesn’t say a word and Will knows if he talks again he’ll set him off.

Matt is unhinged.

He’d set this whole thing up just to get Will’s children and raise them as his own.

Will wasn’t gonna let him.

He watches Will, oddly interested, and when the sandwich is gone Matt is smiling again.

“Well?”

“It was good, thank you.”

“You’re welcome!” he says, coming over again now to take the bottles and the plate, “You need to take a piss?”

Will blushes, hating this so much, and nods.

“I got one of those bedpans! I’ll be back.”

He practically runs out of the room, locking the door again, and Will covers his face with hands letting out a sob. How was he supposed to get through this?

Will wipes his face before Matt comes back but knows his eyes have to be red. Matt doesn't say anything, oddly, and he turns around while Will pees into the bedpan. It's humiliating to say the least, but he hands him the pan after setting it on the floor.

"See? We *can* get along, Will. You know, I really don't want this to be a bad time for you. You're giving me such an amazing gift and...I want to appreciate you while you're still here."

He can't help but glare at him. "You're stealing my children," he hisses, "It's not a gift if you steal it."

Matt sighs.

"I know that, Will, but...see...the *second* I knew I could get you knocked up? They were mine."

"They'll never be yours either, not ever."

"Will…"

Will throws one of the water bottles and it strikes Matt in the chest. "LET ME GO! LET---"

Matt rushes forward, grabbing him by both arms, and Will's eyes widen.

"SHUT THE FUCK UP!? DO YOU HEAR ME!? SHUT UP YOU UNGRATEFUL BITCH!"

He lets out a sob and fights against him, moving to bite, and Matt quickly grabs his throat.

Will chokes, kicking out, but he doesn't let go.

"I've watched other carriers die, Will," he whispers, "I can watch you too. *You* are not in charge here!"

He goes limp and Matt lets him go, jumping back.

Will coughs, holding his throat, and he can't help his tears. "You...you said…"

"My father," Matt growls, "He called me a fucking loser every single day of my life. He told me that raising kids is the ONLY important thing we as a species needed to do and how he wanted to kill me when I was born green. NONE of my brothers were useless, not like me, but I showed them. I showed all of them."

He puts both hands on his belly and doesn't speak, can't, but Matt doesn't need him to answer.

"They never smelled me," he whispers, grinning at Will, "Not once. I didn't have a gift, not like them, but my gift was being unnatural. I had no scent, no reason for one, and they didn't see me coming."

Will realizes suddenly that there might not be a way for him to get out of this after all without Hannibal.

Hannibal.

He can hear Hannibal's voice in his head and clings to the words.

I could find you anywhere.

He only hopes that's true.

Matt shakes his head, laughing maniacally, and Will realizes he's been talking the whole time.

"...and all I'm saying is...I want my babies. But if this is too much work," he whispers, his eyes glowing, "It won't be my fault, Will. It'll be yours."

Will covers his belly and doesn't say a word.

"Be good," Matt says, suddenly smiling normally again, "I'll be back soon."

He picks up the bedpan and walks out of the room locking the door behind him.

Will lays down, shaking, and pulls the blanket up over his bare chest. The water bottle lays on the ground, rolling, and he misses Hannibal's arms around him.

He might never feel them again.

"I'm sorry," he whispers, "I'm...so sorry."

Will closes his eyes and imagines he's there with him. He's so warm and Will leans back into his embrace.

We need you.

Please.

His neck hurts like hell and his whole body aches for Hannibal.

I'm not sure how much longer we have.

Will touches the eggs and they flutter making him sob.

I'm sorry.

I'm so sorry.

Chapter 53

Will has barely had any sleep when he's woken up the morning of day three to Seaweed barking excitedly and running into his cage.

And it is a cage.

He's got a bed and a table, nothing else.

Even dogs get water bowls, but Matt he's sure wants to keep him under watered and weak.

"Wakey, wakey," Matt says, walking in with what looks like a gift bag.

Will's stomach growls and he hates to show weakness as he turns to glare at him.

"You back to strangle me again?"

Matt sighs and sits down beside the bed setting the bag on the table. "I brought you a sorry gift. I was...impulsive."

"You strangled me."

"But...I didn't *kill* you, which just shows you how much I want this!"

Will shakes his head and knocks the bag to the floor. "I don't want your *gifts* ."

"Will...I'm *apologizing* here," Matt says, "You don't want to piss me off."

“I know what happens when I piss you off already,” Will growls, tears in his eyes, “But I still don’t want your FUCKING GIFT!”

Matt’s eyes glow green as he picks the bag up off the floor to reach inside. He pulls out a ball and sets it on the bed. “I’m gonna give you the dog, ok?” he says, his voice thin, “Because you *like* dogs, and…”

Will starts laughing as the tears run down his cheeks. “Do you HONESTLY think I *don’t know* this is a trap? That you’ll just kill the dog if I….” he grabs the ball and throws it right at Matt who catches it so fast Will hisses.

He looks at Will in an oddly calm way. “I thought you’d be happy.”

“I’ll only be happy if I can go home,” Will whimpers, putting a hand on his belly, “I...I *need* him. I...I need...I need to swim, I need…”

Matt grabs Will’s wrist in a soft way, and it still makes his skin crawl. He pulls away and Matt doesn’t fight him.

“I told you,” Matt says, standing up now, “I have somewhere else for you to sleep….if you want. You’ll have water ALL THE TIME!”

Will’s teeth are heavy in his mouth and his eyes go crimson. “What is it? A fish tank?”

Matt blushes. “Well, *no* ,” he mumbles, “Not *really* , it’s kinda a pool but…”

He thinks for a second about saying no, but the water would help keep his strength and being kept away made it more likely Matt couldn’t touch him.

“All day? I’d stay in it *all* day?”

Matt smiles. “A couple of hours at first, if you’re good,” he says, “And...then maybe longer.”

Will’s stomach growls again. “Let me see it first.”

“I can’t do that,” Matt says, “Not yet. You were yelling and you threw something at me. You have to be good for me, Will. Can you be good?”

He wipes his cheeks. “I...I can try.”

Matt claps his hands. “Yes! I knew you’d be happy with this idea! See? We can *work* together! Your last few weeks are gonna be *great!”*

Will sniffles and doesn’t say anything while Matt tosses the ball to the dog who runs to fetch.

“Good boy!”

His stomach growls and hurts. “I’m...hungry.”

Matt stops with his hand mid-throw. “Oh?”

“You want them to be healthy, right?” Will says, his voice shaking, “I need food. A good... *dad* ...would bring them food.”

He watches Matt’s eyes soften. “You called me a dad.”

“You want to be one, right?” Will asks, struggling not to sob, “They need this.”

Matt nods and tosses the ball again before heading for the door. “I’ll get them food! Be right back, ok?”

“Thank you,” Will says, whimpering, “I..they...thank you.”

He grins at Will before he leaves and locks the door again.

Seaweed walks up to Will’s bed and sets the ball in front of him. He runs his hand over the dog’s head and lets out a sob. “Good boy.”

He curls in on himself, tears not stopping, and Seaweed starts to lick his face. Will cries harder, throwing arms around him, and clings onto the poor dog who jumps up onto the bed to get closer.

“G..ood...boy.”

Will has to force himself to pull away and put the dog back down again. Matt could come in at any second and he can’t be seen liking him. Not when he’s already threatened to hurt Seaweed before. He lays down and stares at the door just waiting for him to come back.

His stomach growls again and he bites his tongue. The blood helps a little and his throat aches with sudden thirst. Will hates that he has to ask Matt for anything knowing it could come with a price.

Matt seems to care for the babies more than him, so maybe he can get things that way, and eventually make his way out of this hell. He lays on his back and stares at the ceiling feeling the weight of everything push down on him.

Hannibal has to be so upset with him, he knows that, but no more than Will is with himself.

He’d been so stupid.

The door opens again and he doesn't move at first until the scent of fish makes him sit up. Matt has another fish sandwich on a paper plate that Will takes greedily along with a large bottle of water. He drinks the water first, guzzling it down, and feels so much better he almost bursts into tears. Matt watches him the whole time but he doesn't look at him, eating so fast he almost chokes, and when it's gone he looks at him again.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome," Matt says from the floor, smiling, "See? I told you we could get along."

Will wipes at his face. "I...I need to shower."

"I can give you a sponge bath," Matt says, "I can't...I won't let you outside. It's a long walk to the house and...you can't be trusted. Not yet."

"I...I understand but...I don't want you to touch me."

Matt frowns. "I can bring you a bucket of water?"

He sighs. "Yes, please. I can do it myself."

"Ok but...what are you gonna do for me?"

Will puts both hands on his belly. "What?"

"You threw something at me today, Will. You're being good now but...giving you all that...I should get something too."

He growls. "I'll kill you before you could even touch me."

Matt shakes his head. “I don’t...no! I would...I’m not that kinda monster, Will.”

Will scoffs. “You just kidnap pregnant people and hold them hostage before stealing their eggs. You’re just *that* kinda monster.”

“Will…”

“What do you want?”

Matt leans in a little and smiles. “I want to touch them.”

He feels like he might throw up. “N...no. You did already, you…”

“You want to get watered, Will? Then you give me this.”

Will feels tears fall down his face. “No.”

Matt stands up calmly and glares at him with glowing green eyes. “We were doing so well. This is...disappointing.”

He growls at him, teeth heavy in his mouth, and wishes he had the strength to change more but it’s enough.

“Fuck you.”

Matt walks out of the room and Will pulls his knees up to his belly as the door closes again. His tears don’t stop as he sits there in silence and begins to hum to himself. The song makes him think of Hannibal, of them together, and he fights to keep his eyes open.

How much longer could he last?

Days?

Weeks?

Would he be a shell when Matt ripped them out of him?

If he didn't get to swim soon would they even still be there?

Will falls asleep crying and wakes up to Matt watching him across the room. His vision turns red as he glares at him, and when he sits up Will hears a crunch sound that makes him lift his arm in shock.

His skin is pale, peeling, and he's so thirsty he can hardly speak.

"W...ater."

"You're fading," Matt sighs, leaning against the wall, "She lasted much longer than this."

" *Please."*

"I shouldn't give you anything at all," Matt mumbles, "You've been so mean to me. You know I cooked those sandwiches for you? I got the BEST kinds of buns and the most expensive frozen fish patties! Eleven dollars, Will! I spent ELEVEN dollars on those fish patties!"

Will wants to cry but feels like all the water's been dried out of his body.

“P..lease.”

He sighs again and walks over to the bed staring down at him. “You’re not even a whole month yet and you’re like this. Maybe it’s cuz you were raised by *them* and you’re weak. They’re all weak, I get it, but I thought you were stronger than this.”

Will puts his hands on his belly and the weak flutter across his palm makes him whimper.

“B...abies n...eed…”

Matt scoops Will up into his arms and sounds annoyed when he carries him out of the cell he’s been in for days. The sun makes Will’s eyes hurt and he whimpers, squeezing them shut.

“I’m not even done with the tank,” Matt curses, “I’m gonna have to take you to the lake, but I’m not letting you off wild. I’m not an idiot.”

Will’s heart leaps in his chest as he hears the word ‘lake.’

“I didn’t bring us out this far to have *him* come find us so soon, you know. I shouldn’t even let you out. I’ve seen our kind tear each other to shreds over less, but we’re not even close. Not even a little close.”

He hears the sounds of chains rattling and feels something go around his neck.

“I’m going in with you,” Matt mumbles, “But if you even *think* to swim off, I’m tying you to a tree. You’re probably too weak but better safe than sorry, right?”

“Pl...ea...se.”

He sighs. “Just give me a second, fuck, you’re so impatient.”

Will’s shaking when he feels the water close, and he almost thinks to run but knows he wouldn’t get far. Not like this. Matt must get the chain secure because they soon walk into the water and Will sobs as it touches his skin.

He hisses at the feeling at first because it feels like burning, but he forces half shift and absorbs all he can. Will opens his mouth but knows he won’t be able to scream, but Matt lets him out of his arms and the first thing he does is bite down on his own arm.

Will screams but no sound comes out, and Matt growls, grabbing and tossing him onto the grass. He lands on his back, groaning, and Matt lifts him up by his neck fully shifted.

“YOU FUCKING BITCH! I KNEW I COULDN’T TRUST YOU! I KNEW I SHOULD’VE LET YOU DIE!”

He feels his vision start to blur and he claws at Matt’s arm with his human nails kicking weakly until everything goes black again.

Will wakes up back in his room again, arm dried with blood, and lets out a sob.

It didn’t work.

He covers his face as the reality of everything comes rushing at him.

He’s going to die.

Matt won’t let him survive this, shouldn’t have, and soon he’s going to come in to punish Will for not ‘being good’ like he promised.

I’m sorry .

Will touches his belly and feels the eggs flutter.

I’m so sorry.

He cries so hard he’s exhausted by the time he hears footsteps, and the door opens to Matt holding a syringe. Will crawls into the corner of the bed, growling, and Matt slams the door.

“I wanted to be good to you, Will,” he growls, “I wanted this to go well. I wanted to even let you see them. But after that...I tried to clean it up but...I know he’s coming. We can’t stay here.”

“I’ll kill you if you touch me,” Will growls, “I…”

“You’re too weak to even stand,” Matt laughs, “One swim and you think you’re invincible?”

He rushes for the bed and Will digs his human nails into Matt’s arm making him curse.

“NO!”

“STOP FIGHTING! IT’S OVER! WE HAVE TO---”

A loud crash makes them both freeze, panting for breath, and Will starts to laugh.

“He’s here,” he whimpers, the fight going out of him, “He...he came for me.”

Matt curses and pushes him down onto the bed jabbing the needle into his arm. Will moans, clawing at him, and he loses consciousness again. He doesn’t know how long he’s asleep but

what wakes him is Matt screaming.

He sits up fast and falls out of bed when he tries to stand. Will crawls on his hands and knees to the door in tears, desperate for Hannibal to find him, and collapses at the door in frustration.

“H...anni...bal.”

Will bangs his hand on the door with what little strength he has, and then lays there in tears.

He isn’t sure how much time passes before the door bursts open but he lets out a moan when he sees who it is.

“Noooo,” he whimpers, crawling back, “N…”

Matt is holding his neck, and blood is rushing down his hand as he stumbles into the room. “Y…o…”

He tries to reach for Will but is ripped back slammed into the wall. Will sobs crawling closer to touch Hannibal’s bare shifted foot. He nuzzles his ankle, sobbing, and looks up as Hannibal rips Matt’s head from this body.

Hannibal is fully shifted, covered in blood, and is the most beautiful thing Will’s ever seen.

“ *Mine.* ”

Will holds his hands up and Hannibal lifts him with ease burying his face into Will’s neck. He sobs, clutching at him, and Hannibal carries him out of his cell all the way to the water. Hannibal doesn’t let him go, not even for a moment, and Will doesn’t let go either.

He never wants to let go again.

Hannibal growls, licking his cheeks, and he feels his whole body relax at once.

I knew you'd find me.

Mine.

All yours.

They clutch at each other in silence for how long Will doesn't know, and he lays his head against Hannibal's shifted chest shaking in the water.

"I knew," he whispers hoarsely, "I knew you'd come, I…"

Hannibal licks his neck, nuzzling still, and he leans in to every touch.

"Will…"

Will feels him shift back, skin changing, and takes his human hand putting it on the baby bump. The eggs all flutter in excitement at his touch and Will lets out a sob.

"I'm so sorry."

"Will…"

"I...I was so stupid, I…"

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Shhh…”

He moves against the lake’s edge, clutching him hard, and Will feels like he can breathe again.

“I want to go home.”

“We will, Mielasis,” Hannibal whispers, turning Will’s cheek, “I just...need to look at you.”

Will’s vision is red and he can’t stop the tears that blur his vision. “You found me.”

Hannibal touches his cheek and smiles, his mouth still red with Matt’s blood. “I told you I could find you anywhere.”

Will kisses him hard, shoving his tongue into Hannibal’s mouth, and the taste of Matt’s blood makes him growl. He crawls into Hannibal’s lap, shaking with need, and Hannibal peels down his boxers thrusting into him hard. He groans, meeting his thrusts, and soon he’s spilling between them while Hannibal’s relentless thrusts don’t stop.

“Don’t stop,” Will begs, “Don’t...don’t stop.”

He growls, smashing their mouths together, and Will devours every part of Matt’s blood in his mouth before he feels Hannibal spill inside him. Will pulls back to bite into his neck, and Hannibal does the same. They’re both shaking after, nuzzling every bit of skin, and Will buries his face into Hannibal’s neck.

“I love you.”

“...love you,” Hannibal growls, nuzzling still.

Will hates when he pulls out of him but holds on tight.

“If I wake up and this is a dream, I...I don’t know what I’ll do.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I’m here, Will, I promise.”

“I wanna go home but---”

“Leanne is worried for you,” Hannibal whispers, “But she knows I’m in pursuit, despite not quite understanding why I won’t get the authorities, but we have time.”

Will lifts his head. “She’s worried?”

“She thinks you’ve only been gone for one day,” Hannibal sighs, brushing the hair from his face, “I was less than truthful. She thinks you left because of her.”

“My dad?”

“Has not been called. The only people who know you’re missing are Leanne, myself, and Beverly.”

“Bev?”

“She came to see you and I had to explain. She’s waiting for my call.”

Will sighs. “I just want to be with you right now, that’s...I don’t want to go home to her.”

“I know just the place.”

“Where?”

Hannibal smiles. “You’ll see, but I need to dispose of the aftermath first.”

Will looks back at the house, where he’s almost sure there’s a giant fish tank meant for him inside, and doesn’t want Hannibal to go anywhere near it but knows he must.

“I’m going with you.”

“Will…”

“I spent three days without you thinking I was gonna die, Hannibal. I’m not being away from you again. Okay?”

Hannibal touches Will’s neck and his eyes turn red when he sees the marks Matt left behind.

“He didn’t suffer enough, did he?”

Will moves his hand to the bite mark he left. “No, but...it’s done. I think there might be some things we want inside that house. He...he had a lot of family secrets and...a lot of bodies he left behind.”

Hannibal sighs, his fingers brushing the mark. “Can you stand?”

“I’m not sure.”

He lifts Will up and Will buries his face against Hannibal’s neck again as they leave the water. They head for the room but Will digs his nails into Hannibal’s back. “Wait! STOP!

St…”

“Will?”

“I can’t go back in,” Will whispers, “I...I just can’t.”

“I have to set you down, Mielasis. We can’t leave it this way.”

He nods as Hannibal puts him on the ground and he can see him pick up the pieces of Matt left behind. Will’s whole body screams at being apart from him, even for a minute, but he knows this has to be finished.

The outside of his cell looks so innocent compared to what it was inside, a shed with white trim and a flowery doormat. No one would’ve known what was beyond the door.

Will lays his head against the shed, tears in his eyes, and watches Hannibal pick up everything that connects him here. The mess goes into a giant pile that soon builds the longer Hannibal works and Will starts to get tired but keeps his eyes open the whole time.

It’s nightfall when the fire is started, Matt’s body in the middle of it all, and they watch together as burns. Hannibal brings him some fish he kills himself, much to Will’s happiness, and he guts it before they cook over the flames.

Everything won’t be burned away, but it will be enough.

“We need to get into that house.”

“Will...there’s nothing here worth knowing.”

“Hannibal, please.”

“I will not let you sleep here, not here.”

“I don’t want to be here but this isn’t for me, or you,” he whispers, kissing Hannibal’s hands, “It’s for them.”

He sighs. “Alright.”

Will feels somewhat stronger after eating, and Hannibal supports him as he walks to the house. He’s still wearing his trunks but the idea of putting on Matt’s clothes makes him want to throw up so it’s all he has. The house is immaculate, which should be a surprise but the short time Will knew Matt it seems to fit him. They find detailed notebooks in plain sight on Matt’s bookshelves, the only thing on them, and they all contain results of his...experiments. Hannibal flips through them, his skin turning blue as he stares, and Will goes to read but he snaps the first one shut.

“I’ll take them but we won’t keep these, Will. No one needs to see them.”

Will frowns. “Ok.”

There’s no actual heirlooms of the lost Brown family, which shouldn’t be a disappointment but Will can’t help himself. They know so little about their kind and this felt like a place to learn something that didn’t all involve pain but the Browns didn’t sound loving the way Matt described them.

They scour every inch of the first floor until there’s not much left in Matt’s tiny abode, and Will takes a deep breath before they head for the basement.

Hannibal stops short when they get to the bottom stair. “Will, go back upstairs.”

“No,” Will whispers, “We---”

He turns around and pulls Will to his chest. “Please, Will, go back upstairs.”

Will feels tears in his eyes. “I need to see.”

“Mielasis…”

He pulls away from him and steps into the basement to see what could’ve been his home if Hannibal hadn’t found him so soon. The tank is larger than he expects, nearly seven feet, but it’s not that what makes him back away until Hannibal’s arms come around him.

It’s the other tanks.

There’s got to be twenty, some big and some small, and while his is the only one with water, not all of them are empty. The bones were apparently Matt’s trophies. Will sees the freshest curled up with her arms to her stomach and knows it’s Matt’s sister.

“Mielasis…”

“Burn it,” Will hisses, “Burn it all.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “As you wish.”

They leave the house and are headed down the stairs just as Will pauses seeing a familiar face.

Seaweed is laying in the grass, seemingly scared, and Will feels sick just seeing him at all.

“Will…”

“We can drop him somewhere,” Will says, his voice devoid of emotion, “I can’t...I...I can’t.”

“Of course.”

It’s almost sun up by the time they set the house on fire, and Hannibal carries him with the bag of notebooks under his arm to the car he's parked way off in the woods with Seaweed on a leash at their side. Will watches the flames rise as they leave, and tears fall down his cheeks.

It’s over.

They drive Seaweed miles away, careful not to touch him, and Will doesn’t look when Hannibal drops him in the parking lot of the closest high populated area. He feels his chest hurt to leave him but there’s no way that dog is coming home with them.

Or any dog at all.

“Will…”

“I’m ok,” Will whispers, his voice shaking, “He...he’ll be ok.”

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “I’m here, Mielasis, when you’re ready to tell me everything.”

Will lays against his side as the tears fall down his face.

“I know.”

He falls asleep with his hands on his belly and the eggs fluttering.

They’re happy to be a family again.

I love you.

I love you.

And that’s everything.

Chapter 54

Will wakes up in what feels like a bed, the room around him dark, and screams so loud Hannibal comes running. He flips on the light and rushes to Will and takes him into his arms.

“I...I thought...I’m sorry I…”

“Shhh…”

He looks around, confused, and buries his nose against Hannibal’s neck. “Where are we?”

Hannibal rubs his back. “Somewhere special.”

Will pulls back and looks around more. “How many houses do you have?”

He smiles at Will, touching his cheek, and Will leans into every caress. “Just the two,” he whispers, “Though this...this is...home.”

“You…this is where you grew up?”

“I rarely come here, but...it was the only place I wanted to take you.”

Will’s stomach growls as he stands on shaky legs and falls into Hannibal who lifts him again with ease. “I guess I’m hungry.”

“I’ve been cooking while you slept, which has been quite some time.”

“How long?”

“About seven hours.”

He looks around the bedroom and sees drawings framed on the walls. They’re of various things: flowers, food, and one is even just hands. “You drew these.”

“Yes, when I was much younger.”

Will reaches out his hand and Hannibal moves him closer to the frame. He brushes his fingers across the glass. “Why do you keep this place if you don’t come here anymore?”

“It’s a...museum of sorts, I suppose, of the past.”

He walks them down the line of drawing and one is of someone’s eyes but no face. “Your sister?”

Hannibal pauses. “Yes, those are her eyes. I have various drawings of my family in the house, and some paintings that I...no longer wish to view.”

Will looks at him. “How long has it been since you lived here?”

“Several hundred years.”

“And yet...you kept this place.”

Hannibal touches Will’s cheek. “I suppose...I kept it to show you.”

Will leans in to kiss him softly and lets out a whimper as tears fill his eyes. “Hannibal…”

He nuzzles Will’s cheek, still holding him, and breathes him in again. “I’m here, Mielasis. I’m here.”

“I missed you so much,” Will whispers, shaking, “I...I was so sure that you’d…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I told you, Will, I could find you anywhere. Nothing was going to stop me.”

“My blood.”

“I could smell it for miles,” Hannibal growls, “I...can smell it now.”

Will sniffles. “I really do need to shower I guess.”

Hannibal smiles against his neck. “After you’ve eaten.”

“Ok.”

They leave the bedroom and Will lifts his head up to look around. It’s obviously well taken care of, some things changed but others the same as they were a long time ago. There are more drawings, though a few paintings are in between of more inanimate objects, and when they get to the kitchen Will is surprised to see a table.

“No dining room?”

“Mother didn’t see the need for one, even as we grew older,” Hannibal whispers, “Though I suspect she just liked the house the way it was. I have changed some things like the floors, the appliances, and the heating but...everything is the same as it was.”

Will looks at the paint that's obviously been done over but not replaced. He can see the spots where it came off on the walls. "It's...I feel safe here."

Hannibal sits him down on one of the chairs and kisses his temple. "Good."

He walks across the room to grab some plates and Will can smell the meat even before it's in front of him. The first taste makes him moan, and he doesn't even ask what it is as he chews he's so hungry.

"There's plenty, Will, don't worry."

Will lets out a breath, shaking, and nods. "I just...sorry it's...I wasn't sure for a while when I would get fed so it's…"

Hannibal puts a hand over his on the table. "It's alright, Mielasis."

He entwines their fingers together. "No, it's not, not really but...it will be."

"Will…"

"I was so scared and...I…I kept hoping you'd come but I had to protect them."

He squeezes Will's hand. "I know."

"I wanted to kill him," Will hisses, his vision suddenly a red haze, "But I'm *weak* . I hate being so weak."

“You’re not weak, Will. You were with a madman for three days and survived his machinations. He could’ve killed you, easily, and yet here you are.”

He looks up at him and growls. “I played *nice* , because that’s all I had. My powers make me weak, I’m...I’m useless.”

Hannibal pulls him into a hug and he starts to sob. “No, Will, no.”

“There could be more,” Will whispers hoarsely, “Tons more coming to take me away and I can’t stop them.”

“Will, there are no more.”

“You don’t know that! You…”

Hannibal pulls back to brush the curls from Will’s face. “Yes, I do. Matthew’s books...he’s played with our kind for a very long time. He was overjoyed to find you and I, though my obvious superiority made him focus on you and…bring us closer.”

Will wipes his eyes. “To get me pregnant.”

“Yes.”

“He told me,” Will whispers, “He...he was gonna take them, and raise them as his own.”

Hannibal touches Will’s belly. “But he didn’t take them, Will. Your quick thinking brought me to you, and brought our family together again.”

Will leans his head against Hannibal’s chest. “Because I couldn’t take him on my own.”

He rubs his back and Will sighs. “He used your love against you,” he whispers, “Your love of canines, your love of our children, and…”

“...of you,” Will whimpers, “I...I’ll never think that’s weak. Not ever.”

“Good, because our love makes us both strong.”

Will lifts his head and smiles as the red haze fades. “And we’ll only get stronger.”

“Yes.”

Hannibal puts both hands on Will’s face and he leans forward to feel him more. “I love you so much.”

“I live and breathe for you, Will, right down to my marrow. That is how much I love you.”

Will kisses him again, harder this time, and pulls back gasping for air. “I…”

Hannibal grabs a cup off the table and Will drinks it down fast, shaking, before he’s given another that he finishes just as fast. He lets out a long sigh, touching his belly, and looks down.

“Give me a second, ok? I know you’re thirsty but...I’m still a little shaky.”

The eggs flutter under his palm and he smiles.

“They respond to you very well.”

“They know where the food is coming from,” Will says, laughing a little as he looks up, “I..I was prepared to do anything for them. You know? I would’ve chewed off my own arm if it meant keeping them here.”

Hannibal puts his hands over Will’s. “You’ve kept them here, Will. They’re still here.”

Tears fill his eyes again.

“The notebooks,” he says, his voice shaking, “Did he...write stuff when I was there?”

“Yes.”

“About what he wanted to do?”

Hannibal’s eyes redden and Will feels the shift of Hannibal’s hands against his own skin.

“Yes, and...I wish I could kill him again for even thinking of...any of it.”

Will lays his head against Hannibal’s shoulder and Hannibal lifts up a piece of meat to give him. He chews slowly and swallows the first bite, which only makes Hannibal give him more.

“I wish I could’ve helped you,” he says.

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Next time.”

He smiles. “I can’t wait.”

They eat dinner in relative silence, though there aren't many words needed just touches. He finishes all of his plate and most of Hannibal's, which only means the eggs are feeling much better.

"Did you call Bev?"

"Yes, she...was relieved. She was quite angry with me for not calling the authorities but was able to be persuaded it was more of a danger to you than anything else."

"Leanne?"

"I told her I'm quite close, and have seen someone who looks like you. She seemed relieved as well, and wishes to talk to you if I do save you."

Will takes his hand again. "Not really sure why."

"Neither am I."

Will sighs. "I guess I should shower."

Hannibal kisses his hand. "Or...I could...help you bathe in the tub?"

"A bath?"

"You do love your showers but I think you're still a bit tired to stand that long. I could run the washcloth over your skin, let the water flow, and letting yourself absorb more water would be beneficial."

Will lifts his head and smiles. “You just want to give me a bath.”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Yes, I do. The idea of...worshipping you in that way....cleansing you of this nightmare...is something that is very important to me. Would you like to have my hands on you while you soak in the water?”

He wiggles a little in Hannibal’s lap and feels wetness at his backside, wetting the soft shorts he’s wearing. “Y...yeah, I would.”

“Excellent,” he whispers, “Do you think you can walk?”

Will shakes his head. “No, I think you need to carry me.”

Hannibal pushes the chair back and lifts Will up into his arms. Will lays his head on his shoulder and sighs. “Where’s the tub?”

“Not far.”

This walk through the house is different from the one to the kitchen, though Will still sees drawings all over. The hallway is narrow down here, and there are rooms along the way smaller than the one he left earlier.

“Your room and…”

“Mischa’s,” Hannibal says, his voice steady, “We had rooms right beside each other.”

Will frowns. “I’m sorry if coming here was bad for you, I…”

He shakes his head. “I wanted you to come here, Will, honestly this is...it’s much easier with you beside me.”

There are things hanging under the drawings in this hall: a hair bow, a scarf, a pipe on a stand; and Will blinks back tears for Hannibal having kept them for so long. He expected heirlooms to be golden cups or diamond necklaces. Not this.

The bathroom is bigger than he expects, and the giant shower and tub inside are obviously new.

“You changed this room I see.”

Hannibal sets him on the edge of the tub and turns on the water smiling. “You are not the only one who likes water.”

Will touches the soft shorts he has on that fit so well and frowns. “When did you find time to go shopping again?”

“I’ve had them for when you needed more clothes in the future.”

“Leanne didn’t notice you putting clothes into the car before you left?”

“She was much more occupied with her worry for you,” Hannibal murmurs, picking up a bottle, “Are you averse to bubbles?”

“If you don’t live here why did you update the bathroom? Why...why are there new soaps?”

Hannibal’s skin turns a little blue as he looks at the bottle. “I...I had thought perhaps...this would be a place for us.”

Will blinks. “When?”

He looks at him. “If we entered a relationship and had no means to be alone, I thought this could be a place away.”

Will smiles. “And just disappear for days at a time?”

“Fishing trips, perhaps, or...bonding time. Leanne couldn’t be against that,” he says, smiling at Will, “Though it seems we both were too impatient for such things.”

Will leans in to kiss him again. “Very,” he whispers, “Though I wouldn’t be against some sexy trips in the future.”

Hannibal smiles and holds up the soap. “Bubbles?”

“Sure.”

He lets the bubble bath go in as the water gets higher, and Will stands up to take off his shorts. Hannibal's eyes turn red and Will touches his cheek. “Join me?”

“I had thought to bathe you on your own.”

“We both need to be cleansed.”

Hannibal turns off the water and quickly undresses climbing into the water first before holding out his hand for Will. Will sighs as he sits down, feeling Hannibal’s cock against him, and rocks back against him.

“This...this is what I needed.”

He kisses Will’s shoulder. “As did I,” he whispers, “Thank you for the invitation.”

Will smiles as Hannibal plucks a washcloth hanging above their heads and runs it over his arm.

“Wash it all away,” he says, his voice shaking, “As much as you can.”

He wraps an arm around Will’s waist and bites softly at the mark he always seems to remake.

“I will try.”

Will’s seen movies where lovers bathe each other, running washcloths against skin and pouring water to wash it all away, but this is different. He can almost feel the last few days washing away, and tears fall down his cheeks as he kisses Hannibal’s arm.

“I love you,” he whispers, “I...I don’t think I could ever love anyone else. Not like this.”

Hannibal turns his cheek and kisses him softly. “Neither could I.”

They lay there in the water until it grows cold, and by then they’re both in their other skins. Will’s scales almost seem to glow as Hannibal squeezes the water out of the washcloth, and by the time it’s over Will is sobbing into his shoulder digging nails to keep him close.

“No one will ever separate us again,” Hannibal promises, his razor sharp teeth grazing Will’s neck, “I promise you.”

Will closes his eyes and whispers so quietly no one but Hannibal could ever hear.

“I believe you.”

Hannibal carries him out of the bathroom after it's over and lays him wet in the bed Will knows is theirs. He pulls him close and bites down again making Will shiver.

"Mine," Hannibal growls as Will pulls his hands down to the baby bump.

"All yours," Will says, turning to kiss him again.

He falls asleep with Hannibal's breath on his neck and wakes up the same.

This really is home.

He wishes he didn't have to leave, but knows they have to. Will turns to look at Hannibal asleep and smiles touching his cheek.

Soon they'll have this everyday.

He can't wait.

Chapter 55

They eat breakfast outside the next morning, staring at the water, and Will imagines a younger Hannibal doing the same thing a long time ago.

“It’s so nice here.”

“I’m glad you like it.”

He smiles at him from across the table, their legs touching, and takes his hand.

“I love it.”

“There’s no internet connection, but I can have some installed.”

Will smiles. “You’d better.”

Hannibal smiles and kisses his hand before picking up a piece of bacon to hand him. WIll eats it slowly, licking Hannibal’s fingers, and the desire in his eyes is obvious.

“We have to leave today.”

Will sighs, looking at the water again, “I know.”

“We need a story.”

“I ran away,” Will whispers, his voice shaking, “Because I was angry about the new baby.”

“Will…”

“She’s still spouting off about that, isn’t she?”

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “Yes.”

“Then it fits.”

Hannibal reaches over to touch Will’s bump, and the tadpoles flutter inside him.

“There can be another story.”

“It’s the only one that fits.”

“Where are you going to be saying you were?”

“A hotel? I dunno. I mean, you can always say someone took me but she’s gonna want to call the cops.”

“I told her I thought you were abducted.”

Will bites his lip, squeezing his hand more. “It doesn’t mean I was.”

“You have...marks.”

He laughs as a tear falls down his face. “She won’t notice.”

“Will…”

Will pulls away and starts taking off his clothes. “Let’s go for a swim.”

“Will, we don’t…”

He frowns back at him. “Please, Hannibal, I...I can’t go in alone. Not right now.”

Hannibal stands and takes off his clothes fast until he’s entirely nude. Will admires him up and down. “Can you catch me?”

“We’ll see,” Hannibal says, smiling.

Will takes off running and is under the water fast but Hannibal wastes no time letting him get far. He grabs hold of him barely away from the water’s edge, pulling them close, and they kiss before rising to the surface. He pulls Will up and Will growls in frustration at his belly making it hard to rut against him.

“I’m too…”

Hannibal breaks shift, growling, and pulls Will up onto the grass while his feet dangle in the lake.

“Better?”

Will smiles. “Yessss…”

He lifts Will’s legs up and thrusts in hard making Will groan. This position isn’t ideal but Will’s eyes turn red as he stares up at him, growling with every thrust, and Hannibal kisses the insides of his ankles that soon are blue. “Mielasis, you...you feel so…”

“Fuck,” Will moans, “God, it’s...just...oh god right there don’t stop, don’t---”

Hannibal pulls out fast to turn him over. “Will, I’m sorry I need...I need to…”

Will gets on his hands and knees just before Hannibal thrusts in again, and the relentless thrusts that begin pound against his inner pleasure until he’s hardly able to stay upright. He hums, tears in his eyes, and Hannibal bites on his neck humming along until Will comes hard against the grass.

“I love you,” Will gasps, “I...oh god Hannibal, it’s…”

Hannibal comes with a groan, spilling into him, and Will crumples onto the grass turning them. He licks Will’s wound, growling happily, and Will smiles.

“Outside sex is the best,” he laughs, “I feel boneless.”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “Our bones are a bit less hard than those of humans but they’re more durable so you’re not entirely wrong.”

He smiles. “You’re teasing me.”

“Perhaps.”

They lay in the sun, basking in the afterglow, and Will’s toes dip into the water as he sighs.

“All good things must come to an end,” he mumbles, as Hannibal reaches out to touch his belly.

“We could stay a bit longer.”

“She’ll bother us if we do,” Will mumbles, turning to smile at him, “We have to go back.”

Hannibal frowns. “I’m sorry.”

“So am I.”

They get dressed before closing up the house, and pulling away from it makes Will’s chest hurt.

“We’ll come back here, Will. I promise.”

He smiles. “I know.”

The ride home is long, longer than any other they’ve had, but it’s more time to be alone and they grasp as much as they possibly can along the way. Hannibal turns on the news and there’s some talk of the fire, the aftermath, and it’s “under investigation” which is code for they found Matt’s bodies in the basement.

Good.

They stop at Fuller’s for lunch and eat in the car, Will laying his head against Hannibal while he eats a hamburger and Hannibal gives him bites of his strawberry sundae in between.

“You should call Beverly,” he says to Will, “And your father.”

Will frowns. “I don’t have my phone, it’s at the house.”

“You can use mine, if you’d like.”

He sighs. “You told her I’m ok?”

“Yes.”

“I...I’m not...maybe later.”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “As you wish.”

The last few miles to the house Will starts to get anxious, and Hannibal pulls over on a quiet road. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine.”

“Will…”

“I’ll *be* fine, ok?” he snaps, almost growling, “I just...I just got out of being fucking kidnapped for THREE days. It’s not like I can just easily forget it happened.”

“Will,” he says, taking Will’s hand to squeeze, “I know.”

“I just...I hate having to go back to her. I just want it to be over.”

“After the eggs arrive, Will. I promise.”

He sighs, wiping the tears from his eyes. “I know, I know, it’s just…I want her gone.”

Hannibal lifts his chin up and Will sees the pain in his eyes. “I want the same thing you do, Mielasis, and...you are not the only one who cannot forget you were taken.”

Will rushes forward and hugs him, burying his face against Hannibal’s neck. “I’m sorry I’m being such a brat.”

“You’re not.”

“I just...I wish we could’ve stayed.”

Hannibal rubs his back. “As do I.”

They linger there for another few minutes, just enjoying the silence together, and Will moves away to sit in his seat again. He wipes his face and stares out the window.

“I’m ready, let’s go.”

Hannibal doesn’t argue and gets back on the road until they’re pulling up to the house. Will doesn’t even get a second to take in the sight of it again before Leanne comes running outside.

“WHERE IS MY BABY!?”

Will hisses and turns his face away as she rips open the door, throwing herself at him. Her hug is like knives digging into his skin, and he closes his eyes so she can’t see the redness in them.

“My baby,” she sobs, clutching him hard, “Where have you been? Who hurt you?”

“Leanne, I...I need to get out of the car.”

She pulls back, tears on her face, and smiles at him. “It’s so good to see you.”

Will almost laughs at her but instead nods just as she steps back. He gets out of the car and breathes in the familiar scent of this lake before she’s on him again.

“Leanne, give Will some space please! He’s…”

He shakes his head at him and she pulls back again to nearly yell in Will’s face. “What happened? Where…”

Will sighs. “I’ll tell you inside, I...I’m just tired.”

“Of course! Hanni, order a pizza! We need to feed him!”

“We had lunch on the road, Leanne. Will is perfectly---”

She grabs Will’s hand and pulls him into the house where they flop onto the couch. He hates this forced closeness but knows pushing her away again is just gonna make her angry. It’s not worth the hassle.

“What happened, Baby? Who hurt you? Why...why wouldn’t Hannibal let me call the cops? Off playing bounty hunter like some big strong man,” she scoffs, “He can barely lift my purse sometimes.”

Will sneers as she hugs him again. “I was...I hitchhiked.”

Leanne looks up from Will’s chest. “You got into the car with strangers????”

“I just...I was upset. About all the changes and...the…”

“The baby,” she finishes, pulling back to cover her mouth in exaggerated shock, “Oh honey, I should’ve guessed! You just got me back and now...oh Hannibal, we really should’ve thought of that.”

“Leanne, you’re not pregnant.”

She glares at him. “I can’t believe you, denying your own child like this.”

Will puts a hand on his belly and Hannibal’s gaze doesn’t waver from him, not once.

“And look at him! He’s gained so much weight! Will is having a crisis over all of this and you still refuse to accept it’s happening!”

He feels laughter ready to bubble up again and moves to stand. “I just...I’m ok now. I...I need to shower, and just...can I be excused?”

“Will, we’re not finished.”

“Le... *Mom* ,” he forces himself to say, frowning at her, “Please?”

Leanne’s eyes soften. “Okay, baby, you go take a shower. I’m just glad you’re home safe.”

Will nods. “Me too.”

He looks at Hannibal without saying a word, and heads down the hall where his phone rests just where he left it the day he was taken. There are so many messages from Bev, and some even from his Dad that he can’t bring himself to read them so he just dials Bev instead.

She answers on the first ring.

“WILL! Oh god, I was…” she whispers, *“I was so worried.”*

“Hi,” he sighs, falling back on his bed, *“I just wanted to call and tell you I’m ok.”*

“You sound not ok.”

“I’m not super happy about being back here.”

She sighs. *“I’m sure,”* she whispers, *“How...are the tadpoles?”*

He pats his belly. *“They must be getting bigger because it’s getting harder to hide how big I am.”*

Bev laughs. *“I can’t wait to see.”*

He smiles as tears fill his eyes. *“I can’t wait to see you, I...I missed you.”*

“Will…”

“It...it was...a lot.”

“Will, can I come over now? I’m not doing anything and you sound like you need a buffer.”

He wipes his face. *“I’m gonna shower first but...please. Hannibal has to keep Leanne occupied and I just...I don’t want to be alone.”*

“I’m coming, ok? I’m coming.”

“Ok.”

She ends the call and Will wipes his face before dialing again.

His father picks up on the second ring.

“My long lost son.”

“Hey Dad,” Will says, his voice shaking.

“Will? You sound upset.”

“I just wanted to say hi. I miss you.”

“You sound upset, Kid. What’s wrong?”

Will sits up, his back aching a little, and shakes his head. “ *Nothing’s wrong, I just...I missed you.”*

“Will, I’ve known you for sixteen goddamn years. I know something’s wrong.”

He sighs. *"Please just...talk to me. I need my Dad right now, not the angry ex-husband of Leanne."*

"Will…"

"Tell me something about me, tell me...I don't know. Just something I don't know."

His father is quiet for a moment before he answers. *"You were so small when I first saw you I didn't think you'd make it," he says, his voice shaking, "And she...she wasn't...I don't know what she was but she just wasn't a Mom. Not then, and not now. I became a Dad the minute I saw you lying there helpless screaming for attention."*

Will's eyes widen. " *Lying where?"*

"Will…"

"Why was I screaming?"

"Babies scream, Will, you always were loud when you wanted something. You could be vicious too, especially once you got your baby teeth."

Will put a hand on his belly. *"You...you said 'when I first saw you' not 'when you were born.' Were you not there when I was born?"*

His father was quiet again.

"Dad?"

"Will, I don't want to talk about this over the phone."

“No, I want you to answer me. Were you there when I was born?”

He sighs. *“No, I wasn’t.”*

Will’s stomach hurts as tears fill his eyes again. *“Was she alone?”*

“Yes.”

He closes his eyes. “ *I…I...I just...did she ever even...I mean…”*

“Son, don’t do this to yourself. She wasn’t right in the head when she was pregnant with you, and definitely not after. All of it just...she couldn’t handle it.”

Will sniffles. *“I want to know everything,”* he says, *“When I get home, you’re gonna tell me everything.”*

“I promise, Kid. But I think you know some stuff already.”

He rubs his belly. *“Yeah, some.”*

“Do you need me to come get you, Son? Cuz I’ll hop on the first goddamn plane out there if you need me.”

Will sighs. *“Not yet. I...I’m not ready yet.”*

“I wish you’d tell me what’s wrong.”

“I wish you’d tell me stuff to, Dad, but..I guess neither of us are gonna get what we want right now. Not over the phone. Not like this.”

His father is quiet.

“I love you, Dad. Okay? I just...I need to finish this.”

“I love you too, Kid. So much more than you could ever know.”

Will wipes a tear from his cheek. *“Goodnight, Dad.”*

“Goodnight.”

He sets down the phone and walks from his bedroom to the bathroom where he showers just to feel something. The water doesn’t help, not really, and he misses the lake by Hannibal’s childhood home terribly as he lets the water run down his skin.

It just doesn’t feel the same.

Will wraps a towel around himself and steps out into the hall where Hannibal is waiting. “Hey,” he says, smiling.

Hannibal frowns. “Are you alright?”

He nods. “I called Bev and Dad,” he says, “Bev is coming over.”

“That’s good,” he whispers, “Leanne has ordered a pizza despite what I told her.”

Will smiles and pats his belly through the towel. “It’ll get eaten.”

Hannibal sighs. “I will let you dress and…”

Should I tell Bev not to spend the night?

He smiles at him.

Please.

Will walks back into his bedroom and pulls out a pair of red pajama pants that are a bit too snug to go around his belly so he puts them under while pulling a matching tank that barely covers his bump. He smiles in the mirror and rubs his belly.

“Lookin’ good, huh?” he whispers, laughing, “You really are gonna either be huge or just...so many. I’m...excited to find out though...it might hurt a little if you’re too big so I’m...hoping for lots of you.”

The eggs flutter against his hand.

“I’m your Dad,” he says, rubbing, “I’m...always gonna be your Dad. Ok?”

They move against his hand and he smiles as tears fall down his cheeks.

He’ll never let them feel unwanted.

Not now.

Not ever.

I love you all so much and I've never even met you yet.

The eggs flutter again and Will smiles.

They were made with love, and...they'll be so loved.

I can't wait to meet you.

They flutter again and he smiles.

He really, really can't.

Chapter 56

Bev doesn't bother knocking when she gets to the house and runs into Will's room to hug him without saying a word. He hugs back, closing his eyes, and her hand comes to his belly as they sit on his bed.

"Fuck, I'm so glad you're ok," she whispers, "Hannibal was a wreck over the phone asking me all these questions about Matt."

Will frowns. "He called you?"

She lifts her head. "How else do you think I found out?"

"I thought you might've come over cuz I ignored texts or something."

"Nope," she sighs, laying her head on his shoulder, "He called me up scared out of his mind asking me if I knew where Matt lived or what my Dad knew about him at all. He even asked me to call Molly cuz he worked at her house, right? But she didn't know anything either and it was just…terrifying."

Will feels tears fill his eyes as his arm around her tightens. "It was, yeah."

"I don't...I know you probably don't want to talk about it."

"No," he says, "Not...not tonight. I just...I need to not think for a while."

"I can do that," she whispers, "I can even stay the night and hug you hard so you know you're not alone."

Will smiles. “Well...I mean...if you *want* to that’s fine but...Hannibal kinda…”

Bev lifts his head and laughs. “I get it, Will. Sugar Monster takes top priority.”

He grabs her hand and squeezes. “Maybe, but...I really did want to see you Bev. I missed you.”

She smiles. “I missed you too, I was…” she sniffles, wiping her face, “I’m just really happy everything is ok and...he’s gone, right?”

Will nods.

“Good,” she says, “Now...tell me something good that’s happened because I don’t want to make you dwell on the other stuff.”

He puts his hand over hers on his belly. “They got bigger, that’s one thing.”

“I can tell,” she whispers, grinning, “And they’re movin’ all over.”

“Yeah,” he says, “It’s been almost three weeks now so…”

“The big day is coming closer?”

“Yeah,” Will says, his voice shaking, “It...things could’ve been so different if…”

“Will…”

He wipes the tears from his eyes and smiles. “I’m ok, just...it’s hard not to think about.”

“ *Do you* want to talk about it?”

Will shakes his head. “No, I...let’s just...watch something stupid and wait for pizza.”

“Hannibal’s making pizza?”

“No, Leanne ordered some I guess.”

She makes a face. “Oh, that’s...um...nice?”

“She’s been all over me since we got back, and I guess she was worried while I was gone. I’m not really sure…”

“She’s honestly gotta have something wrong with her,” Bev mumbles, pulling him down onto the bed as she grabs the remote, “Not sure how she can just pretend nothing’s happened like she’s super mom or something.”

“I’m not sure she even remembers,” Will says as she turns on the tv, “It’s….weird.”

“Hannibal is a doctor, shouldn’t he like...care?”

Will smiles as she lays down and starts the first thing that pops up, “Cannibal Slasher.”

“He’s got other things on his mind.”

“Definitely, but her being sort of...confused...could be bad for you too.”

He laughs. “So far it’s been pretty good for me. She’s treating me better now than she did before and the imaginary baby she’s having---”

Bev sits up just as the words ‘Cannibal Slasher’ float across the TV screen. “Imaginary baby?”

Will shakes his head. “She’s got it in her head she’s having Hannibal’s baby but really she’s going into menopause. I guess you can take a pregnancy test and it comes up positive even if you’re...doing that. No matter how many times Hannibal tells her she’s not having a baby she keeps thinking it.”

Bev frowns. “Will, that’s...I mean...what happens when *you* have babies and she doesn’t? Is she just gonna be cool with that?”

He sighs.

There’s no way he can tell Bev what they’re planning, and he knows it. She won’t understand, not really, and confessing to planning the murder of your mother because you dislike her isn’t exactly like Garrett and Abigail, or even Matt. His chest hurts knowing he has to lie to her and keep his ‘monster marriage’ a secret for now.

“I guess we’ll figure things out when that happens.”

“It’s gonna happen pretty soon, right? You said four to six weeks. That’s…”

“Bev, I’ll be fine. Okay? Hannibal won’t let anything happen.”

She reaches out to touch his bump again. “I’m just worried about you and the tadpoles, that’s all.”

“I know,” he says, putting his hand over hers, “And I love that you care about me that much. You’re...the best friend I’ve ever had.”

Bev smiles, blinking back tears. “You’re mine too, you know.”

He frowns. “Even after…”

She squeezes his hand. “You did what you had to do,” she says, her voice shaking, “And...I understand why. It hurts still, and I miss her. I'm not gonna lie about that, but I’m not even sure anymore if I ever really knew the real her.”

“She cared about you,” he whispers, “I mean...I think if she didn’t you wouldn’t have even been alive when we found you.”

Bev frowns as tears fall down her face “Yeah, maybe,” she whispers, “Or maybe she just thought live bait was better than dead.”

“Bev…”

She shakes her head and turns back to the TV. “Let’s not talk about the bad stuff tonight, I just want to be with my best friend and be happy he’s home.”

Will pulls her down into a hug and they watch the Cannibal Slasher attack random teens on screen. He has no idea what’s happening, it’s a summer camp or something, but it’s better than thinking about the horror in his real life.

There’s a knock at his door about twenty minutes later that has them both look at the door shocked when Leanne comes in with a box of pizza. She’s smiling in an odd motherly way that makes Will’s chest hurt before she even speaks.

“Pizza’s here!” she says, “I’m sure you’re both hungry.”

“Totally,” Bev says, as Leanne hands her a pile of napkins and Will the box.

“The whole box?”

“Hanni’s being a pill and says he won’t eat any so I’m having the cheese on my own. If you want more let me know. Okay?”

Will frowns. “Okay, thanks.”

She smiles. “You’re welcome, baby.”

The minute she’s gone Bev turns to him. “Okay she’s definitely not right.”

He lifts the box and stares down at it. “I know.”

“I mean, is it poison?”

Will laughs and grabs a slice. “I highly doubt---”

Bev takes the pizza from him and bites down on it. “Just...let me taste it first.”

“Bev…”

“Will…”

He frowns as she swallows and they both wait what feels like forever before bursting into laughter.

“Okay, now that we’re sure it’s not poisoned...let’s eat.”

Will takes another piece and looks back at the movie. “If Leanne was gonna kill me I doubt she’d poison anything while you’re here.”

“That’s...not the comfort you think it is.”

“I was joking.”

She puts her hand over his on the bed. “I wasn’t.”

“She’s harmless, Bev,” he sighs, taking a bite of his pepperoni slice, “I have claws, remember?”

Bev nods. “I do, but...just be careful ok?”

“I’m not planning on doing anything stupid anytime soon.”

“I know, but...just...be careful.”

He smiles. “I will.”

The movie ends like all the others do, with lots of bodies, though this particular one has the final victim get away they leave it open for a sequel though as far as he knows there isn’t one. There’s one piece of pizza left that they split and lay back down again scrolling through the home screen on Will’s TV.

“Do you need a ride home?” Will asks, picking the pepperoni off and eating it first, “I can take you or Hannibal could?”

“I’ll call my folks,” she mumbles, sighing against Will’s chest, “You want to kick me out so soon?”

“No, I just---”

She pats his baby bump. “I’m kidding, Will.”

“Oh.”

“Though if you want to kick me out just say the word.”

“No, not at all, I was just asking. I didn’t want you to be stuck.”

Bev smiles. “I’m good.”

Will smiles back. “I can see that.”

She lays down again and grabs the remote. “Do you think we have time for one more or…?”

“Let’s...watch something non-bloody,” Will says, fidgeting, “I mean, it can’t all be blood and guts right?”

Bev lands on a romcom and presses play. “Right.”

The movie is a typical romcom with the bubbly blonde getting a job at a magazine and falling for the boss while the mail guy pines over her. Will feels comfort in the softness of it, and is rubbing his belly while he watches when he nears Bev sniffle.

“Bev?”

“I’m fine,” she whispers.

“Bev,” he starts to say, but she grabs his hand tight. “I”m fine, Will. Just...watch.”

Will doesn’t say anything the whole movie, though Bev sniffles a lot and by time it’s done he shuts it off so fast they barely see the end. “Bev…”

“I’m gonna call my folks,” she mumbles, getting up and not looking at him, “I’ll be back.”

He frowns as he watches her go and stares into the empty hall.

What was it about the movie that set her off?

Will gets himself up again and walks out into the hall just in time to hear loud talking in the living room.

“I will NOT touch that thing!” Leanne almost shouts, “No fucking way.”

“If you won’t listen to me, this is the only thing you might believe,” Hannibal says calmly, “I will leave it up to you what to do with it but I’ve washed my hands of this mess.”

“Hanni--!”

“Do NOT keep trying to use your delusion to entrap me into the life you so willingly left behind.”

Leanne’s sudden sobs make Will touch his belly and he jumps when Bev comes up behind to whisper in his ear. “Trouble in paradise?”

“Yeah,” Will mumbles, “Did you talk to your folks?”

“They’re coming in about an hour,” she says, heading back into his room, “Though if after dinner eavesdropping is that good maybe I’ll stay.”

Will laughs. “We can take you home if you want,” he repeats, “Hannibal would probably be happy to get out of the house.”

She frowns, wiping her face again. “I wouldn’t want to bother him with that.”

“You wouldn’t be.”

Bev smiles. “If you’re sure...I can call my Mom again.”

“I’m sure.”

She puts the phone to her ear while Will walks down the hall to find Leanne asleep on the couch and Hannibal standing over her.

“I guess you win,” Will says, kissing his cheek.

He turns to kiss Will on the mouth and boldly pulls him in closer while Leanne mumbles sleepily behind them.

‘Imgnnahavea…”

Will pulls back to smile at him. “I missed you too.”

Hannibal touches Will’s cheek softly. “Is Beverly staying much longer?”

“I actually came to see if you’d give her a ride home.”

“Of course.”

Will kisses him again. “Thank you.”

“Did you think I would say no?”

“No,” he teases, reaching out to touch his lips, “I was prepared to have fun trying to conv---”

“Oh,” Bev says, making Will pull away from him, “Sorry I...I can go back.”

“No,” Will sighs, “We were just...talking about you.”

He can see the pain in her eyes and hates they were the cause.

“Didn’t look that way,” she jokes.

Will shakes his head. “You caught us...at the end of it.”

Bev smiles. “I could see that.”

“Ready to go?”

“Sure.”

Hannibal goes ahead of them, grabbing his keys from the tray by the door. “Let me.”

He holds the door for them both and flips on the outside light. Will pauses for a moment, anxiety seeping in, and Hannibal grabs his arm in support.

“Will?”

“I’m fine.”

“Okay.”

It’s ridiculous to have a thing like it being dark remind him of Matt, but it does. The last few days seem like a nightmare, not real at all, but he still remembers the noise outside trying to get his attention.

Will sits in the front and Bev in the back, though Hannibal doesn’t touch him at all even after they pull away.

“It was nice seeing you, albeit briefly, Beverly.”

“It was...good to see you too.”

“The last time we saw each other wasn’t in the best of circumstances.”

“No,” she whispers, her voice shaking, “But it worked out.”

“Yes, I suppose it did.”

Will’s distress at how the night is ending seems to worsen as they drive, and he doesn’t say anything at all until they get to Bev’s house.

“We’re here.”

“Yep,” Bev mumbles, “My folks are inside so I can just...go.”

She opens the door to step out and Will does the same, running around the car to hug her again. Bev holds him tight, face buried against his neck, and whispers in his ear.

“It might hurt but...I’m so happy you’re happy.”

He hugs her tighter. “Thank you.”

“And take care of those tadpoles,” she jokes, pulling back to rub his belly, “I have ‘cool aunt’ ready to add to my resume in the future.”

Will laughs. “I know.”

He watches her go, smiling still when she looks back a few times, and when he gets inside the car Hannibal hugs him. “Is everything alright?”

“Yeh,” he sighs, “I just...I wish things were different.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Don’t we all.”

The drive back is a slow one full of touches and kisses that are probably too dangerous for even the most skilled of drivers. But they make it to the driveway in one piece and park staring at the house in silence.

“We could sleep out here?” Will jokes.

Hannibal kisses him again. “She’s out for the night I’m sure of it, Will. The sedatives I gave her should be quite good at keeping her pliant.”

He smiles and undoes his seatbelt. “We’ll see.”

They’re both surprised when Leanne is gone from the couch.

Hannibal frowns. “Perhaps I should not have added it to the pizza instead of her drink.”

“Maybe.”

He sighs. “Go get ready for bed. I will check on her.”

Will walks down the hall, bone tired, and takes off his shirt before plopping down on his bed with a sigh. The TV is still on, but he makes no move to start a movie and stares at the screen.

“She’s asleep,” Hannibal says, coming back again, “I suppose after a time she can have moments of clarity while it kicks in.”

Will frowns. “Maybe it’s not such a good idea to stay with me tonight.”

Hannibal closes the door and locks it, frowning back at him. “Why?”

“She’ll notice you’re gone and…she’ll get upset.”

He’s on Will’s bed faster than Will expects, and touches his face with both hands.

“You honestly believe I care what she thinks?”

“No, but...without her...we’ll have no excuse to be living in the same house.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “It will be fine, Will. I made several noises and she didn’t flinch, nor did her heart indicate she was pretending to be asleep. Everything is fine.”

Will sighs, pulling him down again, and Hannibal kisses his bite over and over until Will’s vision is red. “Hannibal…”

“I will not allow anything to happen, Will. I promise you.”

He nods. “I know.”

Hannibal lifts his head. “Now, I do believe there are several things we could do with the rest of our evening. Though I’m not sure which you’d rather do first.”

Will smiles. “I hate to,” he yawns, “Disappoint you but...I'm tired.”

He touches Will’s cheek. “Spending the night beside you is gift enough.”

They settle in Will’s bed and put on a movie Will knows they won’t finish. Hannibal runs his fingers through Will’s curls.

“This delicatessen is not very reputable,” he complains, as someone chops someone else’s head off.

Will chuckles as his eyes grow heavy. “You’d probably run a better one.”

“Yes, I most certainly would.”

Those are the last words he hears before falling asleep again, and when he wakes up to find Hannibal gone he sighs smelling something good wafting from down the hall.

He pats his belly.

“Ready for breakfast?”

The eggs flutter in response and he smiles.

“Me too.”

Chapter 57

Will gets dressed fast, pulling on a pair of shorts and a bigger shirt that doesn't do much to hide his belly but he finds he doesn't care much. He follows the smell of bacon and eggs all the way to the kitchen where he finds Hannibal cooking in a full suit. Will admires him for a second, taking it in, and Hannibal's smile widens before he turns to him.

"Like what you see?"

He smiles. "Always."

Hannibal plates some eggs and turns off the pilot, coming to Will and pulling him in for a kiss that he feels all the way to his toes. He sighs, deepening the kiss, and is pressed against the counter as Hannibal reaches for his waistband. Will laughs, moving back a little.

"Leanne isn't gonna see?"

"Leanne isn't here."

Will frowns. "What?"

"She left early this morning, I gave her my car. She had errands to run, according to her, and I didn't argue."

"That's weird."

"Is it? She hasn't been out of the house since I took her for a checkup."

“She’s barely left the house in a month, so yeah it’s kinda weird.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek, nuzzling against him, and Will sighs. “I thought it was just...a fortuitous event in our favor.”

Will turns around and Hannibal pulls him in again, nipping at his neck. “It is, but...what would she be doing? You said she’s got no friends.”

“Do you really care at the moment?” Hannibal whispers, “Truly?”

He smiles, closing his eyes as Hannibal kisses down his neck. “I guess not.”

Will’s happy to get to be with Hannibal like here, if only for a little while, and when they head for the dining room he’s amused when Hannibal pulls his chair over beside him.

“I could’ve done that,” Will teases, sitting.

“Yes, but you shouldn’t have to, and...I wanted to.”

He lays his head against Hannibal’s chest as they both eat.

“Breakfast used to be my most favorite meal as a child,” Hannibal says, stabbing into his eggs, “I would bring in the eggs from the chickens and often even the milk,” his voice shakes, “Mother was grateful for the help.”

Will frowns and takes his hand. “You never told me how they died.”

“The humans thought we were witches because we prospered,” he says, growling, “That we supped with the devil and fed him victims in the night. They were hunters, but not like

Hobbs. They didn't know what we were. We fled our other home to get away from them but they found us again here not long after."

"And you…?"

"I was alone," Hannibal says, taking a piece of sausage, "I raised myself, and learned how to exist among the humans. Emulate them. It wasn't very hard."

"The hunters…"

"I killed them all," he says, "As I told you."

"Your family?"

"Buried at home," he says, "They died here, but they lived there. I couldn't bring myself to give up either place, for the memories we shared at both were...all I had."

Will nuzzles his neck. "Hannibal…"

He lifts Will's chin up and smiles down at him. "But I can make new memories," he whispers, kissing him, "With you and the children."

Will smiles. "Yeah, we can."

They finish breakfast and don't bother to put on anything to swim. Will doesn't try to run this time, it's not worth the trouble, and they swim fast almost to the cave when he rises up stopping just nearby.

Hannibal resurfaces and frowns. "Will?"

“The...he was there,” Will says, “I…”

He puts both hands on Will’s cheeks and shakes his head. “I’ve cleaned it,” he says, “I...I cleaned all of it there’s nothing left of him there I promise you.”

Will shakes his head. “I can’t,” he blinks back tears, “I…”

Hannibal kisses Will softly and whispers in his ear. “It’s alright, Mielasis. Shh…”

“I want to go back,” Will whispers, “I do, but just not now.”

“I understand.”

They swim some more away from the cave, just enjoying the water on their skin, and they head back inside the house to shower where washing each other turns into more. Hannibal’s tentacles pin Will to the wall as he sticks out bent over while Hannibal thrusts inside him. He groans, wanting to touch himself, but the tentacles hold him down.

“Stupid tentacles,” he moans, “I…”

“They know what you want, Mielasis,” Hannibal teases, “Because they’re a part of me. I know what you want, what you need, and promise to give it to you.”

Will moans with every thrust, his back aching but not wanting to stop. “Just...don’t stop, don’t…”

Hannibal pulls him up fast, his cock bigger already, and bites into his neck just as he comes. Will cries out, moaning under the water, and the tentacles keep him from falling while Hannibal keeps fucking him.

“Fuck, don’t stop, don’t…”

He collapses against WIll, licking at his neck, and the tentacles hold tight.

“That was…”

“Leanne should go out more often,” Will laughs, “I...I wish we could do this everyday.”

Hannibal smiles. “As do I.”

They spend the afternoon watching cooking shows, much to Hannibal’s delight that they are even a thing, and Will falls asleep in his arms only to wake up alone. He pulls on some clothes and wipes at his eyes, dragging himself down the hall.

The house is quiet, almost too quiet, and he goes into the kitchen to find Leanne chopping up food.

He blinks.

She looks...ragged.

That’s the only word for it.

He hasn’t seen her like this in weeks, and the bright happy persona she’s had the last few days seems gone again.

“Um...hi.”

Leanne doesn’t smile. “You were sleeping.”

“Yeah,” he says, rubbing the back of his head, “Where’s…?”

Hannibal comes in from behind them, frowning at Will as he sets down some bags. “Feeling better, Will?”

He blinks. “Um...yeah. What’s all this?”

“Leanne went shopping for food and is cooking dinner for us.”

Will’s hands instantly come to his belly. “Oh.”

Leanne suddenly smiles at him. “I’m makin’ my mama’s famous chili,” she says, “But Hannibal said you’re not feeling too well so I’m gonna make you chicken soup!”

Will nods, backing away. “Um...ok?”

“I’ll call you boys for dinner.”

Will leaves the kitchen with Hannibal at his back, and they don’t speak until they’re down the hall.

“What the hell?”

“She came home determined to feed us,” Hannibal sighs, “So I told her you were sick. You’re under no obligation to eat anything she makes.”

Will frowns. “You shouldn’t either.”

“Will..”

“She looks horrible,” he mumbles, pulling Hannibal into his room, “She didn’t look like that last night.”

“Perhaps the sedative I gave her was...too much.”

Will shakes his head. “No, it’s...no. This is weird.”

Hannibal pulls Will into his arms. “It’s going to be just fine.”

He sighs. “Every time I feel like she’s not completely horrible she throws something like this at me. I...I just feel weird.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “It’ll be fine.”

Will pulls away from him and frowns. “You can’t stay here.”

“Will…”

“She’s busy now, but...you can’t.”

Hannibal puts both hands on his face and sighs. “I suppose you’re right.”

He kisses him and steps back. “Just...promise me you won’t eat anything she gives you.”

Hannibal smiles. “I will not,” he says, “Though I am quite strong and there’s not one food that could damage me in any way.”

“Thank you.”

“I will call you for dinner.”

Will hates to see him go so he looks away when the door closes and pulls out his phone.

ALERT: Leanne is cooking us dinner.

Oh shit. Don’t eat it.

That’s what I told Hannibal.

I can bring you pizza?

He smiles.

No, we’re good.

Keep me posted.

Will sighs and lays back in bed rubbing his belly.

You hungry?

The tadpoles flutter against his hand.

I am too but not that hungry.

He turns on the rest of the cooking show they were watching earlier and plays around on his phone while he waits. Leanne's sudden need to cook for them when she didn't know how to cook at all was more than weird.

Had she spent all day reading '60 Ways to Get Back Your Man' books today or something?

Will sighs.

Something just didn't feel right.

He shuts off the show after missing the same icing fight four times in a row and walks out into the hall. Hannibal is talking, though his voice is muffled, and Will can't help but want to hear.

"It's cut more finely."

"I know, Hanni. I'm not stupid. This is how my Mama did it!"

"Leanne…"

"Just get out, alright? If you're gonna shit all over EVERYTHING just get the fuck out!"

Will steps forward just as Hannibal comes out through the dining room door.

“Dinner not ready?”

“She asked for my help and then got angry when I gave it. There’s no pleasing that woman.”

Will frowns. “Do you *want* to please her?”

Hannibal sighs. “Will…”

“It’s fine, it’s just...having her back after how good today was…”

He frowns at him. “I know.”

“I don’t know how you could stay in this house at all after...what happened...but staying with her? I don’t get it.”

Hannibal smiles at him. “I had someone else to look forward to.”

He grins. “Yeah?”

“Yes.”

I’d say we can go watch TV and make out but…

Soon, Mielasis. Soon.

Will's vision reddens when he watches Hannibal's eyes do the same.

I love you so much.

I love you too.

"I guess it's back to TV for me."

"I'll be in my office."

They both share another look before parting ways, and Will goes back to the cooking show while he tries to remember things won't be like this forever. Leanne doesn't have much time left, not really, and he can wait.

He's waited long enough already.

Will starts to get sleepy again around the middle of the second episode, and his eyes almost completely close when someone knocks at his door. "Yeah?"

Leanne's big smile makes his skin crawl. "Dinner is ready!"

"I'm not sure if I…"

She laughs, taking his hand, "Come on, sleepyhead! Let Mommy feed you."

He lets her take him down the hall, hating every second, and finds Hannibal sitting at the table already. Will pulls away from her and sits in front of a large bowl that looks like chicken soup.

“Dig in!”

They both stare at each other, and then the food.

“Um, I…”

“What did you do today, Leanne?”

Leanne’s eyes widen a little, and then she laughs again. “I drove a while, just enjoying being out of the house since it’s been *so* long, and then some other stuff before the grocery store.”

Will dips his spoon into the chicken soup and doesn’t lift it up to his mouth. “Like what?”

“Read a little,” she says, her voice shaking, “It...I didn’t...it doesn’t matter. I’m home now, and I’ve cooked for my boys. I never get to see you two, you know? This is a family dinner we *really* need!”

He frowns and watches her take a bite of her chili but still doesn’t touch his.

“Why aren’t you two eating?”

Will shakes his head. “I’m still...not feeling well.”

Leanne frowns. “Oh, baby...it’s ok. Don’t eat it if your tummy is...rumbly.”

Will sets down his spoon. “Maybe Hannibal should check me out,” he says, “I really…”

“Yes, perhaps that’s best.”

“I’m sure it’s just a stomach bug,” Leanne says, then giggles in a high-pitched way as she suddenly covers her mouth, “I...I’m sorry! That...I’m sorry.”

Will frowns. “Are you ok?”

Leanne blinks, suddenly not smiling. “I’m fine, baby.”

“Leanne…”

She looks at Hannibal. “Why aren’t you eating either? Are *you* sick? Is *everyone* sick? Am I? AM I SICK?”

Hannibal stands and comes over to help her stand. “Come, let’s...I think you’ve overtaxed yourself today.”

“NO!” she yells, fighting him, “LET ME GO! DON’T TOUCH ME! GET YOUR…”

Will almost snarls when she goes to bite him, and Hannibal expertly maneuvers her in a hold that soon has her slump forward. He sighs and stares up at Will.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault.”

“Yes, it is, but...it’ll be over soon.”

He nods. “Are you gonna stay with me tonight?”

Hannibal frowns. “I think it’s best if I monitor her this evening. Whatever we’ve done to her collectively seems to be getting worse.”

Will’s stomach hurts as he blinks back tears. “Ok, I...I’m gonna go find something to eat.”

“Will…”

He runs from the table and grabs a jar of peanut butter with crackers before leaving for his room. Their perfect day had been so great and to know Hannibal was gonna spend the night with Leanne felt like a rejection even though he knew it wasn’t.

Will locks his door and eats everything he has but still feels hungry. He lays down as tears fall down his face. It was gonna be over soon, he knew.

But that didn’t make this hurt any less.

He falls asleep wishing Hannibal was with him and keeps telling himself it’ll happen soon.

Very, very soon.

Chapter 58

Will wakes up alone that next morning and it feels wrong.

Everything feels wrong.

He doesn't bother getting dressed and goes right to the shower, dropping shift as the water slides down his other skin. It feels nice, but he misses Hannibal, and leaves the bathroom feeling just as bad as he did going inside.

Hannibal isn't in the kitchen, which is weird, and follows the scent of him all the way to the office where is deep into reading something. The book is thin, and when Will comes closer he seems startled, shoving the book into the nearest drawer.

"Good morning, Will."

Will frowns. "What were you reading?"

He shakes his head. "Nothing."

"Hannibal, I saw you reading *something*."

Hannibal frowns. "It...I've been reading Matthew's notebooks. They're...educational at times and...upsetting...at others."

Will's stomach hurts and he puts a hand on his belly. "Oh."

Hannibal opens his arms. "Come here, Mielasis."

Will can't resist, climbing into his lap, and Hannibal hugs him tightly. "I missed you last night."

He kisses Will's cheek. "I missed you as well. I didn't share the bed with Leanne and fell asleep in the chair, which is not very comfortable."

Will's relief is obvious, and he turns to kiss him softly. "Is it bad that I'm happy to hear that?"

Hannibal smiles. "No, it's not."

Will lays his head on Hannibal's shoulder and sighs. "Even if you have to drug her up or something, I want to be with you tonight. I...I need to."

Hannibal takes his hand. "Of course. Are you hungry? I woke rather early and got caught up in reading too long. I haven't started breakfast yet."

His stomach growls. "Um....a little?"

"I can make pancakes, or…"

“I’m actually craving a donut,” Will admits, taking his hand, “I haven’t had one in a while.”

“It may take me a bit to make them but I can, if that’s…”

Will turns his cheek and smiles. “Can we go get some? Just to get out of the house?”

“At a fast food establishment?”

“Yeah.”

“Will…”

Will moves to straddle his lap on both sides and sticks his lip out in an exaggerated pout.

“Please, Doctor Lecter?”

Hannibal’s eyes narrow and Will can smell his desire. “You would tease me so early in the morning?”

Will kisses him and smiles. “I’ll tease you *every* morning when I get the chance.”

Hannibal smiles back. “That sounds perfect.”

“So...can we?”

“Yes, I suppose we can.”

Will kisses him again. “Thank you! I’ll go get my phone!”

He leaves the office excited and rushes down the hall as best he can in his condition. The phone is sitting on the nightstand and he shoves it into his pocket without looking. It’s still quiet in the hall but he finds Hannibal at the door with keys in hand.

“Ready?”

“Yes! I’m starving.”

Hannibal opens Will’s door for him and he slides into the seat, scrunching up his nose a bit at the strange scent inside. “Did you get a new air freshener?”

“I...no.”

“It smells weird.”

“I can roll down the window. Who knows what Leanne brought in here?”

They pull out of the driveway with the windows open, and the breeze makes Will sigh happily leaning against Hannibal. “PERFECT!”

The drive is mostly quiet, though Will’s stomach growls a few times, and when they pull up to Fuller’s Hannibal stares at the screen staring at the menu.

“What can I get for you?”

“Hmm…”

“Just get a dozen,” Will says, “I’m sure they give you all different kinds.”

“Yes, but…”

“If you need help, sir, I can tell you the specials?”

“Yes, I think that’s---”

“WE WANT THE DOZEN!” Will says, growing impatient.

Hannibal frowns. “Will, are you alright?”

“I’m hungry, Hannibal,” he pouts, rubbing his belly and feeling the tadpoles flutter, “And *they* are hungry.”

He rubs Will’s stomach. “Of course,” he says softly, “We will get two dozen.”

“That’ll be---”

Will frowns as they drive forward. “Sorry.”

“There’s no need to apologize.”

“I know but---”

Hannibal squeezes his hand. “No need.”

The Dozen is just as Will expects, a mix of different types, and thankfully both are different. They pull into the parking lot and Will eats two without a word. He’s hungrier than he’s ever been.

“Are you alright, Will?”

He frowns. “I’m just...really hungry.”

“Yes, I know,” Hannibal says, “But you’re rarely as aggressive as this about food.”

Will feels tears in his eyes. “I...I was just…”

“I’m not angry, just concerned.”

He wipes his eyes. “I didn’t eat a lot last night, remember?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“I’m fine.”

They're quiet after that, and Will eats eleven donuts of the twelve while Hannibal gets one. Hannibal opens the next box and he wants more but just stares. "Will…"

"Maybe something is wrong with me," he whispers, "I...I want more."

"You spent days in captivity with very little food, and now you have much. This could be a delayed reaction to that."

Will takes another donut but eats it slowly. "Maybe."

"I know you wish to put it behind you."

"Yeah."

"But...he didn't...Matthew…"

Will shakes his head. "He wanted *them*, not me."

"I gathered that from his notebooks, but...he did talk of you often in them."

He closes his eyes. "I don't want to know."

Hannibal hugs him close and kisses his forehead. "As you wish."

He eats four more donuts, which is a colossal number to say the least, but Hannibal gladly feeds him the last one by hand. Will sighs, licking his fingers, and smiles up at him.

"I love you."

"And I you."

They smile at each other.

"I don't want to go home," Will mumbles, "Can't we just…"

"We can go back to the other house, but it's not exactly close."

"Close enough to swim from the other house."

"By our standards of swimming, yes, but not others," Hannibal sighs, "Will, I know Leanne is…hard to take. But it'll be over soon."

Will sighs. "After she tried to bite you last night I honestly never want to see her again. I wanted to rip her throat out."

Hannibal frowns, taking his hand. "You showed much restraint."

"Thank you."

"Perhaps, we can find somewhere quiet to just...enjoy each other's company?"

“Like where?”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “I know a place.”

“Okay,” Will mumbles, settling against him more, “But can we get a drink before we go? I’m getting thirsty.”

“Of course.”

Thirty two minutes and two orange juices later, they’re driving back toward home much to Will’s upset.

“I said I didn’t want to go,” Will mumbles, “I…”

“Shh…”

He sips at his orange juice, annoyed, and when they pull up to the house he half expects Leanne to run out again. Thankfully she doesn’t.

“What…”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “Would you like to go fishing?”

Will smiles. “For real?”

“The poles are already put away on the boat, and we have no bait but...yes.”

“Okay.”

He brings the rest of the donuts and their drinks to the boat, excited.

“When you got this boat,” Will says, buckling in, “I thought we’d be out here all the time fishing but most of the time we’ve just…”

Hannibal takes his hand and smiles. “Swam together?”

“And...other things.”

They smile.

The ride to their spot is quiet after, Will is just happy to be close to the water, and when they stop he takes out the poles.

“Okay so, now we…”

Hannibal wraps arms around him from behind and kisses his neck. “You smell heavenly.”

Will laughs. “You said you wanted to fish.”

“I did, but...I’m enjoying this more.”

He leans back against him and sighs. “Me too.”

Hannibal takes off his shirt and pants before he lays down to stare up at Will. Will feels wetness rush out of him and he licks his lips staring at Hannibal in just briefs.

Blue briefs.

“I love those so much.”

He smiles. “I remember.”

Will pulls off his shirt and shorts, crawling down toward him. “You really were ready to lure me in the minute I got here.”

“No,” Hannibal sighs as Will knocks him onto his back, taking off his briefs, “The moment I met you.”

He smiles and takes off his own underwear, tossing them aside. “I was the worst,” he laughs, crawling up to straddle him, “You were just….perfect.”

“As were you,” Hannibal sighs, “Will…”

Will peels down his briefs and sinks down on his cock, groaning. Hannibal’s claws dig into Will’s hips as he moves, but he loves the feeling, quickening his pace as Hannibal meets every undulation. He watches in wonder as Hannibal drops his shift, and does the same while his vision reddens. Hannibal’s tentacles brush at his cock and he groans when one starts to stroke.

“Fuck, don’t stop, god Hannibal it….”

He hums as Hannibal’s tentacles tease his nipples, flutter against every inch of skin, and Will comes embarrassingly fast spilling across Hannibal’s shirt but neither of them cares. He keeps riding Hannibal’s hardness, groaning as their mutual humming echoes between them, and Hannibal bares his teeth while Will growls back.

“Mine,” he hisses, “All…”

He comes with a groan, pulsing inside, and Will rides the sensation until he collapses on top of him with a sigh.

“Fuck, we’re good at that.”

Hannibal brushes Will’s back with his fingers. “Yes, we are.”

Will stares up at the sky. “Remember our first fishing trip?”

“How could I forget?”

He smiles. “That started it, yeah?”

Hannibal pauses. “Started what?”

Will lifts his head. “My...monster puberty.”

Ha brushes Will’s cheek. “It was the first time I saw your eyes turn their natural shade.”

“So it was.”

“I suppose so, yes.”

Will smiles. “And the rest is history.”

Hannibal pulls him down into another kiss that makes his toes curl, and soon they’re tasting each other skin to skin humming in sync. He sighs as he feels the tadpoles enjoy them coming together, and laughs pulling back.

“What’s so amusing?”

“The tadpoles, they...they like it when we’re...together.”

Hannibal smiles. “Of course they do,” he whispers, brushing Will’s cheek, “They’re a part of us, Will. We made them and they know it.”

Will puts a hand on his belly and smiles. “Do you know us already?” he asks, “All of you?”

They flutter against his hand and he laughs.

“Does that answer your question?”

Will nods, still grinning. “I guess it does.”

They finish the rest of the donuts for lunch, much to Hannibal’s upset, and the orange juice.

“It’s orange juice,” Will laughs, “It’s good for me!”

“The donuts were not.”

“Then you shouldn’t have bought them,” he teases, lying naked on the boat floor beside him, “Right?”

“I suppose not, but...you asked.”

Will takes Hannibal’s hand and puts it on his belly. “*They* asked.”

Hannibal smiles and rubs his belly. “Well, then I suppose I can make an exception.”

Will kisses him again. “Good.”

They go for a swim after laying in the sun for a bit, staying close, and Will feels an overwhelming need to go further. “Chase me?”

Hannibal frowns. “You’ve just eaten, are you sure?”

He rolls his eyes. “Yeah, I’m sure. Think you can catch me?”

“Only one way to find out.”

Will goes under fast and barely makes it past their shadowy area before Hannibal grabs him from behind. He turns, kissing him hard, and their tails brush under the water while they taste each other.

The cave is nearby, calling to him, but Will still can’t bring himself to go, and he rises up to the surface shaking. Hannibal hugs him tightly. “Will?”

“Sorry, I...I was gonna go to the cave but…”

He kisses his cheek. “It’s alright, Mielasis. It will be there when you’re ready.”

Will sighs. “Yeah.”

They get back on that boat and dress, knowing they can’t stay forever.

At least not yet anyway.

Will’s stomach hurts when the house comes into view, and they don’t even bother to pretend they were fishing when they get into the house.

Leanne suddenly comes out of the dining room with a huge smile on her face.

“There you are! I got up and there was nothing to eat and no one here!” she laughs, coming to hug Hannibal’s side, “Did you boys go off fishing again?”

Will frowns. “Yeah.”

“No luck, huh?”

“Um, no but…”

His nose wrinkles as a familiar scent hits the air. “Did you get a new perfume or shampoo or something?”

Leanne moves away from Hannibal, laughing again. “What? No, no, no, no, no. Nope! Not me! I am gonna go take a shower.”

The minute she’s gone Will frowns at Hannibal. “That was...uh…”

“Strange,” Hannibal says, frowning, “I...I’m going to go look and see what she’s been up to, Will. If you’d like to take a nap I’ll take you for a proper lunch.”

Will smiles. “It’s almost two o’clock.”

“And?”

He kisses him. “Ok, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal’s eyes redden. “I do quite enjoy hearing my professional name from your lips.”

“Good.”

Will goes to his room, locks the door, and takes off his wet clothes before climbing into bed. He pulls out his phone and sees a text from his dad.

Call me later. I think we need to talk.

Ok.

He frowns. “Weird.”

He texts Bev a few things and puts on a movie that he barely watches before he crashes.

Will expects to be woken up an hour later, maybe two, but instead is woken by his phone ringing.

His Dad again.

He ignores the call, still half awake, and sees the time.

It’s almost six.

Why hadn’t Hannibal woken him?

Chapter 59

A/N: I have to preface this by saying this chapter has been in the works from VERY early on in this story and I completely understand if people don't want to read it.

I don't want to ruin it but I know how traumatizing WRITING it was and I know Will's eggs have been so anticipated and it's not what people were probably hoping it would be but yeah.

Please don't hate me.

runs

*****

He dresses in some comfy shorts and a shirt before heading down the hallway.

What he finds stops Will in his tracks.

Leanne is sitting on the couch, and Hannibal is lying in her lap. She's petting his head when she looks up at Will.

"What's....going on?"

"Hanni is tired," she says, "And...I think...you and I need to talk. Don't we?"

He puts a hand on his belly and doesn't move. "I don't have anything to say to you."

"Don't you? You ruined my life once already and now...now you come here, and...and…"

Will pushes out at Hannibal, hoping to wake him.

I need you, please wake up.

He doesn't move.

"What did you do to him?"

Leanne looks down at him. "What I had to, and...now…" she stands, setting him down softly, "I have to finish what I started a long time ago."

Will backs away from her. "Don't touch me!"

Her eyes filled with tears. "I tried to kill all of them," she whispers, "But...HE stopped me from getting to you. No one's gonna stop me this time."

Will stares at her with wide eyes. "What?"

"The eggs," she whispers, "Your egg! I tried to...but..but he...he…"

The sudden horror dawns on him. "You killed them," he whispers, "My...brothers...my...sisters…"

"THEY WERE MONSTERS! I...I didn't remember but...I...I found the book...I saw the pictures...I REMEMBER...and I...I have to…"

Will can hardly breathe as the tears fall down his face. "Book?"

"THE NOTEBOOKS! The books in Hanni's office! The ones that talked about how you were…" her eyes widened, "You...YOU! You…you're carrying some inside you right now, aren't you?"

Will growls, backing away from her.

She read Matt's notebooks.

She knew everything.

He looks to the left and the right before deciding to shift completely, his clothes ripping and phone falling to the floor. She pulls out a bottle and shakes it. "I HAVE MORE! I...I CAN GET RID OF YOU AND WE CAN BE HAPPY! I…"

"HE'S A MONSTER JUST LIKE ME!" Will growls, "We're...he's MINE!"

"NO!"

Leanne rushes forward just as Will does the same, and he knocks them both to the ground. The bottle breaks, spilling whatever was inside all over the floor. She kicks out, making him groan as her feet hit his stomach, and he rolls her down, snapping his teeth until she grabs the lamp hitting him in the face.

Will screams, pushing her back, and scratches across her forearm as she smashes his face into the puddle of whatever was inside that bottle.

She cries out, kicking with both legs at his stomach again, and he backs away panting with rage as his vision blurs.

"You want to protect them," she pants, "You...you…"

He shifts back, tears falling down his cheeks, and holds out his claws in front of him.

“I’d *die* for them,” he whispers, “You have no idea what I’d do for them.”

Leanne has blood running down both her arms, a gash in her face, and her eyes are terrifyingly wild. “Then *die* !”

She jumps at him then and Will bites into her shoulder, making her scream just as he spots his phone smashing it against her face.

There was a voice he barely could hear, his rage was so set, and before he could even lash out again he felt a rush of water come out of him.

“Oh no,” he sobs, “No, no, no!”

The eggs.

They were coming.

Leanne was panting, her shoulder dripping with blood, and he fights to keep his eyes open, the fuzziness so familiar.

Matt.

Matt’s books.

She’d made whatever he gave Will.

Will groans, trying to stand, and practically drags himself down the hall backing away from her as she grows closer. He feels the first egg come out fast, dropping to the floor, and he moves to grab it but she hits his arm making him cry out.

“NO! I HAVE TO!”

He sobs as she smashes it under her foot and forces himself to stand running down the hall.

Will knew they were still falling, the pain was so great, but he had to save as many as he could.

He needs to get them out before she gets them all, the only way to keep them safe, and when he gets to the bathroom he stumbles, falling to the floor again. Will forces himself up again and leans his back against the door keeping her out.

She screams, ramming herself against the door, and Will picks up the eggs as they fall desperate to get them somewhere safe.

“I’ve got you,” he whimpers, “I...I…”

The toilet was closest, the water fresh, and he starts to stick them inside when she slams against the door again. He struggles, the pain worse than anything he’d ever felt his entire life, and he pushes as hard as he can hoping to finish the rest.

He had to protect them.

Even if he couldn’t raise them, he knew Hannnibal would, and that was enough.

That had to be enough.

Will falls forward just as the door smashed in hard, and he closes the toilet lid as she squashes two more with a frying pan. He sobs, trying to grab for them.

“Momma, please don’t! Please...just...KILL ME! PLEASE JUST KILL ME! LET THEM GO! I…”

She has a knife in her hand when she lets the pan fall, and he backs away barely able to move when she sees him look at the closed toilet lid.

Leanne’s eyes widened. “You hid them, didn’t you? There’s more! There has to be…”

“NO!”

Will shifts fully then, growling, and takes all the strength he has left in him to knock her to the floor. He bites into her jugular over and over again until he has no strength left. Will sobs, falling to the floor beside her, and she twitches still alive.

He starts to hum as his eyes grow heavy, and the comfort in the song makes him smile.

I love you .

A loud growl makes him open his eyes to see Hannibal in the doorway, fully shifted, and the last thing Will sees is him rip Leanne’s head clean from her body howling in pain.

He wakes up naked in a tub filled with water, and Hannibal’s arms are around him. Will’s head shoots up, eyes wide, and nearly stands before Hannibal kisses his neck softly.

“WHERE ARE THEY! WHERE…?”

“Will, look! LOOK!”

Will looks down at the water and his eyes fill with tears.

There were six eggs in the water with them, still unharmed, and Will can barely see through his tears.

“I’m sorry,” he sobs, reaching out to touch them, “I”m so sorry I...I didn’t...I tried to stop her and I...I’m so sorry she…”

Hannibal wraps his arms around him tighter, kissing Will’s neck again. “You saved them, Mielasis. You...you saved them and yourself. She...she’s gone, Will. She’s gone.”

Will turns, sobbing into his shoulder, and Hannibal’s claws dug into his back but he doesn’t care.

“I was reckless,” Hannibal whispers, his voice thick, “I...I thought she would never...I...I did this, Will. I...I gave her the means and the opportunity to…”

Will lifts his head. “What? You...you didn’t do this! She...Hannibal, she wanted to kill me since the day I was born. She...you didn’t do anything! She...we thought...I thought…she could never hurt me, not when I had you.”

Hannibal wipes the tears from his face. “I should’ve been more careful.”

Will puts both hands on his face. “We should’ve killed her sooner,” he says, his voice shaking, “It...it was both of our fault, but we...we have them, and...they’re safe.”

Hannibal kisses him then softly, kissing his cheeks one by one, and Will hugs him.

“I love you.”

“And I love you.”

They pull apart, smiling, and look down at the eggs. They’re moving in the water so much that Will can’t stop the tears from falling again. “They’re...ok.”

“Yes, I...I found them in the toilet after I tended to you. You began to heal much better once I put you in the water with them. The bond you share with them is...very strong.”

Will runs his hand over the closest egg. “Hey there, remember me? I...I tried to...keep you safe. I...I tried really hard.”

Hannibal kisses Will’s cheek. “You protected them with your life, Will. Please don’t...please don’t think you didn’t do all you could.”

Will lets out a sob as he touches them one by one. “I...I won’t let anyone hurt you,” he whispers, his voice thick, “Not ever again.”

Hannibal hugs him tighter. “Neither of us will, little ones. We’re a family now.”

Will smiles. “A family.”

They lay back in the water again, skin to skin, and Will watches the eggs move around in the water. “How long until they get big enough to…?”

“Another four weeks,” Hannibal whispers, “We will keep them in water as they grow and the egg sacs will provide sustenance until they’re old enough to hatch.”

Will frowns. “But they’re ok?”

“It’s early,” Hannibal says, “But not threatening to their growth. They’ll be fine in time, Will, I promise you.”

He leans back against him and sighs. “I won’t let them go, not again.”

“I know.”

Will can barely keep his eyes open but fights it, desperate to keep them safe, and Hannibal kisses his forehead. “You can rest, Will. You didn’t have enough rest before, and you need it. Please?”

“You...you’ll stay awake?”

“I promise, Mielasis. I will not let them out of my sight.”

He starts to close his eyes just as a loud bang makes his eyes widen.

“What was that?”

“I’m unsure,” Hannibal frowns, “I…”

Another crash makes Wil hiss, and he rushes to grab the eggs just as someone stomps down the hall.

“WHERE IS MY SON?”

He stops, eyes wide, and stares at the door just as it comes crashing open.

His father is standing there holding a gun and he looks terrified.

“Dad?”

Michael Graham points the gun up as he stares at Will. “Son, get out of the tub.”

“Dad, it’s not what it looks like, we…”

Hannibal pulls Will back down, growling, and turns to look at his father. Will sees his father’s eyes widen, and he backs away shaking his head. “No, no, no...he...oh fuck not again! Will, get away from him!”

Will can’t stop himself from shifting, and hisses grabbing onto Hannibal tight. “No!”

He watches his father lean against the bathroom door and sigh. “Shit.”

“I”m not gonna let you hurt him,” Will growls, “Not him! We...he’s mine! I…”

Micheal slides down the door and falls to the floor in defeat.

“I knew I shouldn’t have let her take you,” he whispers, “I...I tried to fucking hard to keep you from...shit.”

Will shifts back, still growling, and doesn’t move.

“You knew.”

“Fucking yes, I knew,” his father sighs, “I...fuck, I need a drink.”

“You knew all this time and…” Will whispers, his voice shaking, “And you didn’t tell me.”

“Will,” Hannibal says, touching his cheek, “Perhaps he was merely trying to protect you.”

“I don’t need *you* to defend me you fucking sick fuck! He’s sixteen years old!”

Hannibal doesn’t look at his father again and puts another hand on his cheek. “I know.”

“And you…”

“I should’ve had restraint,” Hannibal whispers, “But...I knew he was mine the moment I smelled his scent on her.”

Michael groans. “Oh fuck, where is she? Does she know about all this? Is she…”

Will glares at his father. “She’s dead.”

He blinks. “She’s...dead?”

“We killed her,” Will growls, “Because she...she was gonna kill me and she…she…” he lifts up one of the eggs as tears fill his eyes, “She killed my children.”

Micheal’s face turns pale. “Your...oh son.”

“Just like she killed my brothers and sisters,” he whispers, “She said...she said *HE* stopped her. It was you, wasn’t it? You…”

“Will…”

Will sets the egg back into the water and runs his hand over the top. It flips around, swimming in the water, and he smiles. “I...I tried to protect them all but she…”

“Will, I’m so sorry. I…”

He looks up at his father coldly. “You should’ve told me everything and I never...I would’ve known. I could’ve…”

Hannibal pulls him to his chest. “Mielasis, calm yourself, it’s...it’s over she’s gone.”

He buries his face into Hannibal’s neck, sobbing, and Hannibal rubs his back.

“I thought keeping it from him would be better! I thought...I wanted him to get married to a nice girl and be normal! I didn’t…”

Hannibal turns to glare at his father. “We will *never* be normal, Michael, but that does not make us any less worthy of being our true selves. Will was desperate to be himself the moment he came here, and he blossomed. He...he’s grown so much in such a short time. You almost kept him from that.”

“From being knocked by an old man? Yeah, I did, but I…”

Will looks over Hannibal’s shoulder. “I love him, Dad. We’re a family now.”

His father sighs. “Will…”

“If you can’t deal with that? You never have to see me again.”

“I’m sorry,” his father says, his voice thick, “I...I should’ve told you everything and...if you want to know, I can. Right now, I can tell you everything.”

Will sniffles and lifts his head. “Tell me.”

“Can you both just...put on some clothes first?”

He shakes his head. “No. I need this, Dad. Okay? If you can’t deal, that’s fine but…”

Michael sighs and closes his eyes leaning against the broken door.

“Okay, okay, I...I just won’t look, but I’m gonna go get that drink.”

He gets up from the floor and leaves them alone again making Will relax for the first time since he arrived.

“Will, are you alright?”

Will shakes his head. “No, but...I will be,” he looks down at the eggs, “I...I have to be, right? They need me.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “We all need you, Mielasis, but...you’re allowed to be upset. It’s been a very upsetting day for all of us.”

He lays down across Hannibal's chest again. "I know."

"Your father…"

"He'll come around," Will whispers, "But...the story, I'm not sure I'm ready to hear it."

"I know."

"But I have to hear it. I need to hear it, because...I just…"

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "I'm here, Will," he whispers, "I'm here."

He smiles up at him. "I know."

They lay there, waiting, and he tries not to let the phantom pain settle in again. Hannibal's arms tighten around his back and he closes his eyes. "I love you, Will."

"I love you."

A knock makes them both turn to see his father holding a bottle of wine in his hand. "I found something."

"That wine is worth twenty two hundred dollars," Hannibal growls as his Dad takes a long swig of it.

"It tastes like shit."

Will sighs. “Dad…”

He sits on the floor again and sighs leaning against the door.

“Alright, alright, Kid. I’ll stop upsetting the old man.”

“Dad!”

Michael puts up his hand. “Hannibal,” he says, “I’ll stop upsetting Hannibal and just...talk. You ready?”

Will looks at Hannibal and then nods. “Yeah, I’m ready.”

Michael sighs. “It all starts...with a party.”

Chapter 60

Will leans against Hannibal as he listens to his father speak.

“Leanne was the prettiest girl at that party,” he whispers, his voice breaking, “Prettiest girl at most parties when I met her.”

Hannibal takes Will’s hand and he squeezes. “That’s why you liked her? Cuz she was pretty?”

“I didn’t have the flashiest car, or the best of everything like some fellas my age but I had her and that...it meant a lot for a while.”

Will turns to look at him, still holding Hannibal’s hand. “But?”

Michael sighs and takes another drink. “She wasn’t...your mama didn’t want to settle down, not for a long time.”

“Leanne told me she cheated on you throughout your marriage,” Hannibal says, “Because you didn’t give her enough attention.”

“That’s bullshit!”

“Yes, well...she was prone to lying.”

“And you weren’t lying to her?” he snaps, making Hannibal tense against Will.

“I was, but I still made her feel important.”

Michael laughs. “Important? I worked my *ass* off for that woman for FOUR years! She...she nearly drained my life savings to buy stupid shit she didn’t need and then...then she just...disappeared.”

Will turns to look at the eggs again, sticking his hand into the water, and can feel them even from far away. “Because she got pregnant.”

He sighs. “Yeah, kid. She came back to me way bigger than she shoulda been but I...I loved her. I shouldn’t have, not still, but...I was a stupid fucking fool. I knew it might not even be my kid, I...I knew something was wrong but...she was my wife.”

He blinks back tears. “So you didn’t marry her because she got pregnant.”

“No, but...that didn’t last either. She was around for a while and then she just kept getting bigger. I wanted to go to the doctor but she said no, and...she wouldn’t let me touch her, not at all. Not the whole time.”

“And then she left again,” Hannibal says.

“Yeah,” he sighs, taking another swig, “And I was worried about her cuz of the kid, she told me it was mine that it was just one but I thought there could be more. Nobody is that big when they’re having a kid and not carrying more.”

Will leans back against Hannibal who kisses his forehead. His hands brush some of the closer eggs and they move just like they used to inside him. The tears keep falling and he knows they won’t stop.

Not for a long time.

“I looked all over,” his father says, his voice shaking, “For weeks I looked and then she just...she called me up yelling. Told me she needed me so I came.”

Will closes his eyes.

“Were they already gone?”

Micheal lets out a sob. “It was such a mess, I...I didn’t know what I was seein’ till I realized she had the same color on her hands as they were. I kept asking her what happened and she just said, ‘I got them all’ like she’d done this great thing. I searched all over the room and...I found you.”

Will lifts his head and his father smiles at him.

“You stopped her,” Will says, his voice thick, “She told me you stopped her.”

“I did,” he whispers, “I knocked that bitch right out and I took you. I didn’t know what to do, but I wasn’t gonna let her have you. It took me a few days to realize you needed water and then...one morning I woke up and there you were,” he smiles at him, “Screaming and yellin’ at me for some food. The most beautiful little baby I’d ever seen.”

“Thank you,” Hannibal says, “Thank you for…”

“He was my son,” his father mumbles, “Don’t thank me for lovin’ my son.”

“You just never saw her again?”

“Not till that day in court, no.”

Will wipes his face. “And I was just...I mean...there was no sign of anything weird?”

Michael takes another swig of the wine bottle and sets it down beside him. “Not from you, no.”

Hannibal runs his hand down Will’s back. “But from someone else?”

Will frowns at him. “What?”

“I ain’t gettin’ into all that.”

He looks at his father. “What are you talking about?”

“Your father…”

“HE WAS MY SON!” Michael yells, slamming the wine bottle down, “MY SON!”

“Our kind doesn’t leave their children behind,” Hannibal continues, “Your sire would’ve returned for you.”

“Dad?”

His father closes his eyes. “Shut him up, Son. This story…”

Will growls. “WHAT STORY?”

Hannibal kisses Will’s cheek and whispers in his ear. “He killed your other father.”

His eyes widen as he turns to Hannibal. “What? No, he didn’t! He...he just didn’t come back. I would’ve known if…”

“Will.”

Will wipes the tears off his face. “He didn’t! I would’ve…”

“Kid, I...I couldn’t let him take you.”

He shakes his head as he locks eyes with his father again. “Dad?”

Micheal’s face is covered in tears. “You were a little boy! I...I wasn’t gonna let that *Thing* take my son! I did what I had to do.”

Will lets out a sob, covering his mouth.

“Mielasis…”

He falls into Hannibal’s arms and buries himself against his chest.

“I did everything I could not to let anyone hurt you and here I come into....Will, I...I’m so goddamn sorry. I should’ve…”

Will cries into Hannibal’s chest, unable to stop, and he hears his father get up without saying a word. The door closes and he looks up at Hannibal through his tears. “You knew?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “Not until this moment, no, but I should’ve. Your sire just not returning didn’t seem right to me.”

“He might’ve…”

“There are things about Leanne we will never know, Will. Their relationship might not have been voluntary, or if it was she was tricked into carrying his eggs,” he touches his cheek, “He may have raised you in a cold, strict environment or he may have been good to you. There’s no way of knowing, but...your father loved you. This is what you do know. He loved you, and he cared for you despite everything. Even now he cares for you, and...he’s a good man.”

Will nuzzles his hand. “I know.”

“The monster in this is dead,” Hannibal says with tears in his eyes, “And...so are our children. But we will care for our eggs and help them thrive.”

Will kisses him softly and presses their cheeks together. “I love you.”

“I love you.”

He lays back down in the tub, and lifts up each egg one by one.

“They’re getting bigger already.”

“Yes, your bond is so strong. You...you’re so strong, Mielasis, I…”

He smiles at him through his tears. “I would’ve died for them,” he whispers, “I...I would’ve.”

Hannibal wipes the tears from his cheeks. “Thankfully that didn’t happen or I don’t know what I would’ve done.”

Will kisses him again. “You would’ve raised them to be strong, and been good to them. I know that.”

“Will…”

He puts down the egg in his hands and lays against Hannibal’s chest. “We need more water.”

“This is from the lake outside,” Hannibal whispers, “I can get more, if you’d like, but I have to move.”

Will shakes his head. “No, I...the tap is fine. Cold. I...I want it cold.”

Hannibal turns on the water and they watch it run, filling the tub higher. “That’s good.”

He wraps his arms around Will. “We...have something else to discuss.”

Will frowns. “What?”

“I’ve...saved...some meat from our shared kill.”

He looks up at him. “No.”

“Will.”

Will sniffles, shaking his head. “I will *not* monster marry you with *her* in my mouth. Hell no!”

Hannibal puts both hands on his cheeks. “Will, we killed her together, and it’s…”

He pushes him back and the water splashes around as he moves all the way to the other side of the tub. Will pulls the eggs in closer to him, still shaking his head. “No, no, no, no. Absolutely fucking not.”

Hannibal sighs. “I respect your decision.”

“Get rid of it,” Will whispers, “The body too, I don’t...I want the body gone. I don’t…”

“It’s already gone,” Hannibal says, “Leanne will share the same fate that the Hobbs family did, and her wounds...will follow the same path.”

Will wipes the tears off his face. “I’ll kill someone else with you,” he whispers, “But not her. She’s...no.”

“Will, I apologize. I should’ve known better.”

He hugs the eggs closer to him. “It’s ok.”

“No, it isn’t. It was callous and hurtful of me to even think of...ruining our union that way after what she’s done.”

Will closes his eyes. “We were gonna do it before, Hannibal, it’s not...if she hadn’t...what she did…”

“Mielasis…”

Will sighs and looks at him again. “I’m not mad.”

“Yes, you are,” Hannibal says, “And I don’t blame you. Are you hungry? I can bring you something to eat?”

He nods. “A little.”

“I can…”

Will grabs his arm before he can try to get up. “NO! No, no,” he says, moving over to him again, “I’m not that hungry yet. Don’t...don’t.”

Hannibal pulls Will into his arms. “I won’t go.”

He sighs, his eyes getting heavy. “I’m just...gonna rest my eyes a little.”

“I’ll be here, Mielasis. I promise.”

Will soon drifts a little, relaxed enough to give himself some rest, and when he opens his eyes again it’s to voices. He blinks, confused, and hears Hannibal’s voice.

“He’s the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“Same here,” his father says, mumbling through what sounds like food, “But the bottom line is…”

He breathes in and suddenly his stomach rumbles when he smells what is obviously pizza.

“Where’s…?”

His father lifts up a pizza box and moves it closer to the tub where Will grabs a slice. He gobbles it up so fast he nearly chokes, and goes for a second while Hannibal rubs his back. “Slow down, Will.”

“He’s hungry, let him eat.”

“He’s gone through a very difficult---”

Will finishes his second piece, coughing, and then puts up his hand. “I’m good,” he mumbles, “I...thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

He looks back and forth between them. “Did I miss a lot when I was asleep?”

“Not much,” his father says, “I was just telling Hannibal here that I still think he’s a scumbag and he was tellin’ me that I’m a shitty father because I should’ve told you all this stuff sooner.”

Will leans against Hannibal and sighs. “He told me before I fell asleep that you were a good man.”

Micheal blinks. “You did?”

“Yes, well…”

“And since I know my Dad I know if he *really* didn’t like you he wouldn’t have talked to you at all.”

“Son…”

Will smiles. “You know you wouldn’t have even tried.”

“I just wanted to tell him what I thought of him, that was all.”

Hannibal sighs. “And he did, in great detail.”

Will kisses him. “Good thing I love you.”

“Good thing.”

His father groans. “God, I can’t...you got TV in this place?”

“Yeah, in my room.”

“I’ll be there so you can...do whatever.”

“Wait!”

He turns again. “What?”

Will frowns. “You’re staying?”

“Yeah, Kid. I ain’t going anywhere.”

He lets out a breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding. "Good."

His dad smiles. "We're gonna talk later, you and I. Alright?"

"Yeah, Dad."

The minute they're alone again Will looks around the bathroom. There's dried blood still everywhere and if he closes his eyes he can almost hear Leanne's screams. "Will?"

He shakes his head. "I'm fine."

Hannibal kisses his shoulder. "No, you aren't, but it's been a traumatic day."

"Yeah."

He reaches down to the floor and lifts up a cell phone. "I asked your father to bring my phone in case you wanted to call Beverly."

Will stares at it. "I…"

"Merely a suggestion."

He shakes his head. "Not now."

"As you wish."

He lays back into the water, moving lower, and the feel of being submerged makes him calm. The eggs float as he drops shift, and Hannibal kisses his forehead. "I am now imagining you

and our litter swimming in the lake. They'll want to emulate you, perhaps even already are, and they...they'll take to the water faster than most."

Will's vision reddens. "Hannibal…"

"And you'll be such a good teacher, Mielasis, and a very good father."

He whimpers, burying his face against Hannibal's side, and the tears make it hard to speak.

"I love you," he says, running his hand down Will's shoulder, "So, so much."

Will lifts his head and kisses him still out of shift, climbing in his lap. Hannibal's tongue gets longer as they taste each other, and he whimpers when they part. "I love you."

"You did so well, Will, and I'm...so proud."

He smiles. "Yeah?"

Hannibal puts both hands on his face. "Of course, Will. What else would I be?"

Will leans forward and nuzzles his cheek, resting his head on Hannibal's shoulder again. His eyes feel heavy as he lets the water soak into his limbs, and he sighs. "If I fall asleep again, just...don't eat my Dad."

"I promise I will not."

He sighs. "I'm proud of you too," Will whispers, "You...you're the best thing that's ever happened to me too."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Sleep well, Mielasis, and have happy dreams.”

Will isn’t sure that he will, not tonight, but he’ll try.

Chapter 61

Will wakes up in the tub by himself before sunrise and immediately panics, staring around the room wildly before he realizes he's not alone at all.

Hannibal is cleaning the bathroom thoroughly, meticulously ridding the room of all traces left behind of the horror that happened here just hours ago, and he watches him in the slivers of moonlight. His chest aches as he touches the eggs, needing the comfort, and when Hannibal lifts the toilet seat up to pour the water down the drain he gasps as memories come unbidden again.

He turns. "Did I wake you?"

"No," he says, shaking his head, "What time is it?"

"Not morning," Hannibal says, closing the lid, "Will, if it would make you feel better we can take them into the bedroom."

Will looks down at the eggs and shakes his head. "No, I...I'm fine here."

Hannibal nods, setting the bucket down as he comes over to the bathtub. "Do you want me to join you again?"

"You don't have to," Will whispers, "I…"

He touches Will's cheek. "Would you like me to?"

"Y...yeah," he says, "I...I would like you to."

Hannibal takes off the clothes he has on that almost look like pajamas but fancier, and climbs into the water that's long gone warm. He wraps his arms around Will and kisses his cheek.

“Better?”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

“We’ll change the water in the morning,” he says, squeezing him tight, “And move them to the sink for a short time, unless you’d like them to experience the lake?”

“The idea of letting them leave this room sounds terrifying right now.”

“As you wish.”

Will closes his eyes. “My dad?”

“He’s sleeping in your bedroom,” he whispers, “I did not tell him how often we shared your bed, although I will admit I was tempted.”

Will laughs. “How much more do you want him to hate you?”

“I’m not sure he could dislike me more, but for now it’s...a good distraction.”

They’re both quiet.

“Hannibal…”

“I’d like to leave this house as soon as Leanne’s body is found, but it would look suspicious so it’s best not to right now.”

Will sinks further into the water and feels the eggs all fluttering around nearby. He reaches out to touch them and they respond, just like they used to in his belly. His eyes fill with tears.

“I...I’d like them to hatch here,” he whispers, his voice shaking, “Where...the rest of them are, if that’s ok.”

Hannibal turns his cheek and kisses him softly. “Of course.”

He drifts then, clutching Hannibal’s chest, and when he finally wakes up it’s morning again.

The tub is just him and the eggs but sitting across from him on the toilet lid is his father.

Will realizes right away he’s dropped shift and starts to shift back, scared at the reaction he might get, and jumps when his father grabs his hand.

“Don’t,” he whispers, “I’ve been here for a while, Kid.”

He looks down at the babies, eyes widening at their size, and smiles even as he’s afraid to look at his father. “They got bigger.”

“Yeah, they did, your old man says they’re real strong….just like you.”

Will reaches out and touches every single one, trying not to cry again, and they respond just as they have since the first time. The fluttering in the water makes him laugh a little as the eggs roll around.

“I know you don’t...I mean...you don’t want to see me like this. I can change back.”

“Will…”

He can't help the tears as they fall down his face. "I've gotten really good at it," he whispers, staring at his clawed hands and shifting them back to human, "I…"

"Look at me, Will."

Will closes his eyes. "I can't."

"Son, look at me."

Will forces himself to look up and his father smiles. "I never thought I'd look at one of them again," he whispers, shaking his head, "I thought because you hadn't shown any signs maybe you were more her than him but...this is you. I can see you. This...it's you."

"Dad…"

His father gets up off the toilet and kneels down by the tub. Will is startled when he reaches out to touch the closest egg, though it doesn't respond to him at all. "I still remember it took a long time for you to do anything for me, I think...you were waiting for her or your...your real father."

Will grabs his arm. "You *are* my real father."

"Will…"

He puts his hand over Michael's on the egg and it flutters across his palm.

"Look at that," he laughs, "I guess I needed a seal of approval."

"Yeah, they...they're very...they have a lot of life in them."

“It took a lot for them to get here, I don’t blame ‘em. Not after...”

They look at each other then, tears on both their faces, and Michael pulls Will into a hug. He leans on his father’s shoulder and bursts into tears.

“Shh…”

“Dad, I…I don’t…”

His father rubs across Will’s fin, and he clutches him harder, whimpering as he hears the door open. Hannibal is standing in the doorway watching them, and Will locks eyes with him from across the room.

Are you alright?

He nods.

Hannibal is carrying large buckets of what Will knows are lake water in both hands and he sets them on the floor. Will pulls back, sniffling, and wipes at his face just as he shifts back to human again.

“Son…”

“I’ve brought water to refill the tub, but I can come back.”

“Nah, I’m gonna go get some air,” he mumbles, “Will, I’ll be back. Ok?”

Will nods.

The minute they're alone Will stands, pulling Hannibal into a kiss, and gets hugged even tighter than his father had just a moment ago.

"You're certain you're alright?"

"Yeah, I just...it was strange, him seeing me like that."

Hannibal moves the hair back from Will's face and smiles. "I prefer it when you drop shift myself but…I'm quite biased."

Will smiles and kisses him again. "Flattering me when I look like crap?"

"You look beautiful."

He shakes his head. "No, I don't but...I love that you think so. Do you...where can we put them?"

Hannibal frowns. "The sink for now?"

Will nods and picks up each egg one by one bringing them over to the sink where he puts water almost to the top. It's a mess when they start to move but he still smiles watching them try to pile on each other.

"Be nice," he whispers, "It's not gonna be long."

Hannibal lets out the water fast and refills all the way back up before they reintroduce them to the tub. Will doesn't immediately get inside this time, kneeling by the edge, and Hannibal sits beside him.

“How are you feeling?”

He sighs. “Sore, but...better,” he looks at the spot where Leanne stabbed him, and there’s little more than a scar now, “Good thing I’m not human, huh?”

“Very good thing,” Hannibal says, kissing his shoulder.

The eggs seem to like all the extra room now that Will isn’t in their way, and he watches them move around happily.

“Did they find the body yet?”

Hannibal pauses. “Yes,” he whispers, “And I’ve reported her missing. I’m not...quite sure how recognizable she’ll be without dental records so it may take some time.”

Will looks at him and smiles, reaching out to touch his cheek. “You got your fun in too, huh?”

Hannibal takes his hand and kisses it softly. “I wouldn’t call it *fun* but...yes...I got in some...time with her after I took her head.”

Will’s teeth suddenly feel heavy in his mouth and he licks his lips. “Good.”

“Will…”

He looks back at the tub, running his hand in the water, and sighs. “Yeah?”

“Would you like to take a shower?”

He frowns. “Do I smell?”

“No, but perhaps...there are...remnants...still on your person that you’d like to be cleansed of.”

Will looks down at himself and sees nothing, but he can almost *feel* what Hannibal means.

“I...I’m not sure.”

Hannibal rubs his back. “It was merely a suggestion, if you’d like to remain as you are that’s perfectly fine I…”

Will runs a hand over his belly, and sighs. “I...yeah, I...you’ll stay here?”

“I will guard them with my life.”

He kisses Hannibal again softly and stands, stumbling a bit before he’s upright. The few steps he takes away from the tub are hard, and he looks back a number of times but forces himself out the room.

The walk toward what was once Leanne’s room isn’t as hard as it should be, mostly because he knows she’s no longer there. He doesn’t linger and goes right into the bathroom where he turns the spray on the coldest setting stepping inside.

He washes off his arms first with the nearest washcloth that smells of Hannibal, shaking as he watches the water turn blue. The memories start all over again when he’s on his legs, and Hannibal’s body wash can’t stop the tears as the last remains of his children’s blood goes down the drain.

Will slides down to the floor, covering his mouth to keep quiet, and can't stop crying as he lays there.

He doesn't know if he's ever gonna feel ok again.

Will doesn't know how long he's there before Hannibal steps inside.

"Oh, Will….you...you didn't have to," he whispers.

"The eggs, they…"

Hannibal pulls him into his arms. "Your father is watching them."

Will relaxes. "I...I thought I could but...this is letting them go. I'm not sure I'm ready to do that yet."

"You never have to let them go, Will, not really. They were a part of you for some time and you did bond but...there are six others that need you just as badly."

He sniffles. "I know."

Hannibal sits him up as the cold water goes over them both. "Do you want me to finish you?"

"Please?"

"Of course."

He turns all the way around and Hannibal begins to wash his hair with care, his fingers making Will's skin tingle, and when he gets on the conditioner Will leans back to smile.

"I love this."

"Good."

He's sleepy again when Hannibal has him stand, washing his back, and when they exit the shower together he finds clothes for Will to wear before they're in the bathroom again.

His Dad is on the floor smiling down at the eggs but looks up to smile. "Better?"

"A little."

"Me and the grand-eggs are just chillin' out. They still don't like me but we'll get there."

Will sits down on the floor and puts his hand over Michael's again. "I'll help."

His father smiles. "Maybe I need the seal of approval from *both* the dads?"

Hannibal sits on the toilet seat and shakes his head. "Until you've learned to call me by my name and not nicknames about my age that won't happen."

"It's either I call you old man or we kick each other's asses. I don't think I'd make it out of that one so…"

Will laughs. "You'll get there."

It goes like this for most of the day, though by mid-afternoon Will's in the water again. He can't help the need to be close, and no one says anything when they find him there.

"I'm gonna order another pizza. You want anchovies, old man?"

"I do!" Will says, making his father scrunch up his face in horror, "What? I like fish!"

"Anchovies? What has he been feeding you?"

Will smiles. "Do you really want to know?"

"Nope, nope...I'm...I'm out."

Hannibal smiles. "You never told me you liked anchovies."

"I didn't know I wanted to try them till just now," he shrugs, "I…"

A ringing makes him pause, and Hannibal's hand comes to his shirt pocket.

"Who's calling you?"

Hannibal holds out a blue phone, not familiar to Will at all, and hands it to him.

"It's not for me, Mielasis...it's for you."

Will blinks. "I don't have a blue phone I…"

“Your phone was....damaged...in the aftermath. Your father took the liberty of getting you another and it’s been filled with messages from someone you seem keen to ignore.”

Will looks at the screen.

Bev.

“I...I’m not sure I…”

“Will, I’ve told her you’re ill many times already and she is growing worried. If you wish for me to explain the situation I will but...perhaps…”

He shakes his head and takes the phone answering.

“Hello?”

“Will! Jesus Christ, where have you been? Hannibal’s been lying to me about you being sick and…”

His eyes fill with tears. “I...I’m fine.”

“You don’t sound fine.”

“Bev…”

“Did something happen?”

“Bev, I don’t...I’m…I…”

He reaches for the eggs and touches each one by one. “Will, tell me what’s wrong.”

“I…”

Will hangs up the phone and lets it fall to the bathroom floor.

“I can’t, I...I...I…”

Hannibal pulls him into a hug across the tub, and he leans into him.

“Shh...I can tell her, if…”

He buries his face into Hannibal’s neck. “I was supposed to take care of them,” he whispers, “I...she’s gonna…”

“Beverly loves you, Mielasis, she will not blame you for this, I promise you.”

Will shakes his head just as the phone rings again. He ignores it, and they sit there in silence till it finally stops.

He knows he’s got to tell Bev what happened, but...he’s not ready.

“Can you tell her for me?” he asks.

“Of course.”

“Not now,” Will whispers, “Just...hold me. Please?”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “You don’t have to ask. Do you want me to come in the water?”

Will shakes his head. “No, just...don’t let go.”

“Never.”

They hum together, and it feels different this time.

It’s not a mating song now.

It’s their song.

And right now it’s a comfort Will truly needs.

Chapter 62

Will doesn't know how long Hannibal holds him for, lost in the comfort of having him close, but eventually he feels him tense up, looking toward the door. "What's wrong?"

"There's...excuse me," he mumbles, standing fast and leaving Will alone in the bathroom.

He stares after him, frowning, and goes under the water further touching the eggs from underneath. He feels an odd tingling when he touches each one, like they're trying to communicate with him, and he smiles.

"I'm listening," he whispers, "But there's no rush."

Will goes under the water completely and stares up at the eggs above him. It's a big enough tub that they can move, but still he knows he can't stay forever. He reaches up to touch them again just as there's a loud yelling outside the door.

The voice is muffled but he'd know it anywhere.

"TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG? WHERE IS HE?"

He sits up fast, the water sloshing out onto the tile, and before he can pull the shower curtain Bev bursts through the bathroom door.

She's got swollen red eyes, her hair is messed, and she stares at him in shock.

"Bev, I…"

“Oh fuck,” she whispers, “Will…”

“I...I…”

Hannibal appears behind Bev and puts a hand on her shoulder. “Beverly, I do believe it’s best if you went home. Will’s not quite ready for visitors.”

Tears run down Bev’s face just as Will’s tears start over again.

“She...she can stay,” Will whispers, “She...it’s...it’s ok.”

“Will, are you certain? She can---”

Bev sniffles. “I can come back, I...I was just so worried and upset I didn’t…”

Will shakes his head. “No, it’s fine. Just...tell me when the pizza’s here.”

“Of course.”

Bev steps into the room and closes the door behind her before sitting on the toilet seat. She walks up to the tub and sits down, smiling as she sees the eggs closer.

“There’s so many,” she whispers.

Will wipes the tears from his face, nodding, even as he pulls them in close at her words.

“Yeah, there’s...a lot but...there...I...I had more.”

Her eyes widen. “ *Had* ?”

“She...she...Leanne…”

“On fuck,” Bev curses, shaking her head, “Oh Will, no she...fuck.”

“I tried to save as many as I could but she…”

Bev pulls him into a hug and he hugs back tightly. “You didn’t do anything wrong, Will, it was her. She...god I can’t even imagine. Where...how did she get past him?”

He closes his eyes. “She did something to him,” he says, “He wouldn’t have let her hurt them, or me, he…”

She lifts her head, wiping the hair back from Will’s face. “I know, Will. I know. He loves you, and...shit, I’m so sorry.”

“You’re...you don’t blame me?”

“What? Why would I? I watched you carry them! I know how you felt! You honestly thought I’d be mad?”

He shakes his head. “I don’t know, I just...the last few days have been hard. I’m barely thinking straight.”

“Neither is Hannibal apparently if he’s letting you have pizza delivered,” she joked, making Will laugh.

“That’s my Dad,” he says, sitting upright again and wiping his face, “He and Hannibal are trying to get along.”

Bev gasped. “Is that who the guy in the living room was?”

“Yeah, that’s him.”

“And he’s...ok...with all this?”

Will pulls the eggs in closer to him again, letting them lay across his chest as he nods. “He knew,” he whispers, “For a lot longer than I thought he did.”

“Shit.”

“Yeah,” he laughs, looking up again, “It’s been a long few days.”

Bev reaches out her hand. “Can I?”

He frowns. “What?”

“Touch one?”

Will picks up one of the eggs and holds it in his hand toward her. She touches the outer shell softly and the egg flutters against her palm. “Oh wow! Just like your stomach.”

“Yeah,” he whispers, pulling the egg back to him again, “They’re feisty.”

Bev smiles and watches him let his eggs go into the water alone again.

“Just like their Daddy.”

He smiles. “Which one?”

“Take your pick.”

Will laughs.

The two of them are quiet as they watch the eggs roll around, and he lets himself relax. This is Beverly, his best friend, the person who became one of his most important people in only a month. He can trust her.

“How long till they can come out?”

“Hannibal says four weeks.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah.”

“They love you,” she says, smiling, “I can see they keep trying to get closer.”

Will smiles. “Yeah.”

“I’m really happy for you,” she says, “Even if...things…”

He reaches out to touch the eggs one by one as tears fill his eyes. “Thank you.”

“Don’t push me away again, ok? I just...I was worried. I didn’t mean to come here while you’re still...mourning.”

Will sniffles. “I know.”

“Can I ask you something else? You can just ignore me or say nothing but...where’s Leanne?”

His vision reddens. “Bev…”

“You don’t have to tell me,” she whispers, squeezing his hand, “But...was it like...the farm?”

Will closes his eyes.

“I love you, Will, you’re my best friend and I…”

“I had to stop her, “ he whispers, his voice shaking, “She...was...she wanted to kill them *all* . She…”

Bev squeezes his hand. “Good,” she says, her voice thick, “Good.”

Will opens his eyes as tears fall down his face.

“Bev…”

She looks down at the eggs. “I’m glad you got her.”

“Hannibal, he...finished it.”

A tear falls down her face as she whispers, “Good. Fuck that bitch.”

“Bev…”

She smiles at him. “Friends who cover up murders together stay together, right?”

Will pulls her in for a hug and she wraps her arm around his neck. “I love you, Bev, and I...I’m so glad you’re here.”

Bev sniffles. “The tadpoles had to meet their cool aunt, right?”

Will laughs as she pulls back. “Right,” he says, blinking back tears, “I’m sure you can’t wait to babysit my little monsters.”

She laughs. “I can’t wait.”

Will smiles. “Me neither.”

A knock makes them both turn just as his father peeks into the bathroom. “Hungry?”

“Yeah,” he says, “I don’t think Bev wants any anchovies though.”

“Anchovies?” Bev says, making a face.

His father hands him a small box and he opens it, the scent making his mouth water. “Yep, it’s…”

“I’ll go get some normal food,” she laughs, getting up and holding out her hand, “Hi, I’m Bev.”

His father shakes her hand. “Michael Graham, Will’s Dad.”

“Yeah, he told me. It’s nice to meet you, Will and I…”

“Hannibal told me you’re friends,” he said, “You’ve been a good friend to Will, he says.”

She smiles at Will. “He’s been a good friend to me too.”

“I’m glad he...had someone.”

Bev nods. “Me too. I’ll be right back, Will. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Will waits until she’s gone to look at his father. “I told her,” he says, “About Leanne.”

“You trust her?” he asks.

“With my life, yeah,” he whispers, looking at the eggs, “I...I trust her with their lives too.”

“That’s good enough for me, Kid.”

Will sighs. “Did the police call?”

“Not yet, but it’s only been a day since they found the body and your old man just called so…”

“I’ll have to take them somewhere if they come.”

“Nah,” he says, “Not yet anyway. Even if they show up there’s no reason to talk to you.”

“She was my mother,” Will says, touching the egg’s all over, “I’m sure…”

“It’ll be fine, Kid,” Micheal says, “Just fine.”

Will looks at him. “I just want this to be over, I just…”

“It will be fine, Will. Don’t worry and eat your pizza.”

He looks down at the open carton, almost forgotten, and picks up a piece. The taste of the anchovies makes his teeth ache and he eats two pieces so fast he’s growling.

“I guess you like it!” his Dad says, laughing.

Will blushes, wiping his mouth. “Um...yeah.”

“Good. It smells like shit but if it’s got you eatin’...”

Another knock has them both turn just as Bev opens the door. “Room for two more?”

Will smiles. “Yeah.”

Hannibal sits down beside Will and Bev leans against the door holding a plate with pepperoni pizza on it. Hannibal picks up a piece of anchovy pizza and takes a bite, chewing as his eyes widen in surprise.

“It’s good, right?”

“Oddly yes.”

“Gross,” his Father mumbles.

Will laughs. “It’s good!”

“We’ll take your word for it,” Bev says, smiling.

Hannibal reaches in to touch the eggs, and Will’s chest aches when they all respond to him.

“They’re getting larger,” he says, “Very fast.”

“Yeah?”

“Mmm hmm,” he whispers, looking at Will, “They’re very strong, our little ones.”

Will looks down at the eggs again and puts his hand over Hannibal's. "I...I knew they would be."

Hannibal entwines their fingers together and Will's whole body grows warm.

I love you.

Hannibal squeezes his hand.

I love you.

They smile at each other.

"Um...you want us to leave?"

Will blushes, leaning in as Hannibal pulls him close, and Hannibal kisses his cheek. "Eventually, yes."

Bev laughs. "I didn't think you'd say yes."

"He's a jerk," his father says, "But Will likes him so…"

Will lifts his head. "Thanks for coming, Bev," he says, "I...I'll call you, ok?"

"You'd better," she says, coming over to give him a quick hug, "And don't let Hannibal hang up on me again."

“You hung up on her?” Will asks, “Hannibal…”

“She refused to listen when I told her you were indisposed, Will. What else was I supposed to do?”

Bev opens the door and grins back at him. “Have fun, sugar monster.”

“I like her,” his father says, “She’s a keeper.”

She laughs as she closes the door. “Yes, I am!”

Hannibal sighs. “Will…”

“I’m not mad,” Will whispers, “Just...be nice.”

“I’m *very* nice. I haven’t attacked your father yet for his rudeness.”

“Hey!”

“And I’m eating pizza without complaint. I think that’s all very nice behavior.”

Will smiles. “It is.”

“Well, I’m gonna go check on some stuff in the garage,” Michael says, standing, “Give me a holler if you need me.”

“We won’t need you,” Hannibal mumbles softly, kissing Will’s neck.

“Hannibal…”

The minute he’s gone Hannibal kisses Will softly, the touch so tender Will whimpers when he pulls away. “Mmm, don’t stop now.”

“The children are a bit...in the way of this going any further and...you’re still healing.”

Will sighs. “I’m…fine, I just am a little sore.”

Hannibal lifts his chin. “Not that type of healing.”

He frowns. “Oh.”

“I can wait, Mielasis, it’s quite alright.”

Will sighs. “Can you at least come in the water with me?”

“Of course.”

He pulls away and stands, taking off his dress shirt and trousers folding both before getting in with Will. Will sighs happily when he’s in his arms again, laying back, and Hannibal kisses his neck.

“Better?”

“Much.”

“Mmm,” he whispers, kissing Will’s cheek, “You smell like anchovies.”

Will laughs. “That’s a good thing?”

“Very.”

He kisses Hannibal again, vision turning red, and their kisses get more heated until there’s a poke in Will’s chest making him look down. The eggs have all gotten closer to them, bunched up together, and they’re bobbing in the water like they’re looking for attention.

“It seems, they want our attention.”

Will pulls them in closer, touching each egg one by one. “I think...they’re gonna get bigger faster than we think. We might have to start thinking of names.”

Hannibal kisses his temple, and Will leans against him again. “As long as we don’t name them Michael I’ll be happy.”

We laughs. “Not even for a middle name?”

“I’ll consider it.”

He sighs. “I...I’m happy.”

“That makes me very happy to know, Mielasis, I...I don't like to see you in pain.”

Will shakes his head. “You’re in pain too, though, I mean...I feel like it’s all been about me.”

Hannibal kisses him again, deeper, and Will whimpers when they part. “Everything since I smelled your scent on *her* has been about you, Will. It’s always been about you.”

“But you’re allowed to be sad too, they...they were yours too, Hannibal.”

He touches Will’s cheek as a tear falls down his face. “They were, and I...I will mourn them for an eternity, but I have you, and the six still here. That is what I wish to focus on, not...the destruction she caused us.”

Will nods. “Me too.”

Hannibal presses his forehead to Will’s. “To know that you’re happy at this moment, Will...that’s everything.”

Will smiles. “Not everything,” he whispers, kissing Hannibal’s mouth again, “But...it’s a start.”

Chapter 63

The morning of the third day after his eggs come into the world Will's woken up by something poking him in the chest. There's not much sun coming into the room but he knows he's alone in the tub, and when he opens his eyes he's surprised at how much bigger the eggs are.

"You won't be able to stay with them in the tub much longer," Hannibal says, startling him.

Hannibal is staring out the window, not moving, and Will can almost feel the tension coming off of him from across the room.

"What's wrong?"

"There are boats in the lake outside," he says, making Will nearly jump out of the tub to look with him.

Sure enough there they are, with lights on them, and it's obvious even from here it's the police.

"What are they looking for?"

"The monster who's been eating people," Hannibal says, wrapping his arm around Will, "They won't find one."

Will leans on him. "You're sure they can't...I mean...I used my claws."

"Your DNA wouldn't match anything in any database, and it's already been stated in the paper it's of reptile-like DNA. They're not looking for any type of human, which is why they haven't come here."

He relaxes. “You’re sure?”

“Very,” he whispers, kissing Will’s cheek, “I’m sorry if I woke you.”

“You didn’t,” Will laughs, “They did. I think maybe I’m in the way.”

“No,” Hannibal says, nuzzling his neck, “There’s just not enough room.”

“Can we move them into my bedroom or...I mean...I don’t want to sleep on *her* bed.”

Hannibal pulls him closer. “I can move your bed into the bedroom I shared with her, or take out some furniture in yours. Whichever you prefer.”

He looks back at the eggs in the dark. “I don’t want...I don’t want to be anywhere she was.”

“As you wish.”

They watch until the boats go away, and Will climbs back into the water while Hannibal remains outside. He frowns as he lays in the water, grabbing Hannibal’s hand. “I’m sure there’s enough room.”

“I won’t want to impede their progress, or your need for closeness.”

“Hannibal…”

He kisses Will’s hand. “I’m fine here, Will. Please, get some rest.”

Will fights to stay awake, but loses that fight fast waking only when the room is full of sun. He's alone again, naturally, and the sound of annoyed yelling makes him get up. There's a robe, thankfully, hanging on the back of the door and he puts it on peeking out into the hall.

His father and Hannibal are on opposite sides of his dresser. Hannibal is at the far end, and they seem to have stopped.

"Is everything ok?"

"Yes, of course, Mielasis. We apologize for waking you."

"We're fine, Son. Go back to bed."

Will frowns. "I can help."

"No need, Will."

"I…"

They both pick up their ends before he can even come closer, and begin to move the dresser down the hall. Will watches, frowning still, and is reluctant to leave the eggs so he just goes back into the bathroom.

There's more sound of yelling and some bangs but eventually Hannibal returns with breakfast.

"Did we wake you?"

"No, I was up," he says, yawning, "I'm surprised you let Dad help."

“I didn’t want him to help but he insisted.”

“Oh.”

“I told him that since he is much older than I in body it would be much better if I carried the dresser on my own but he refused.”

Will smiles. “You thought that would make him *not* help?”

“I was merely being courteous.”

He laughs. “Sure.”

“I’ve made you some eggs for protein, and the waffles for sweetness. They’re made with strawberries.”

“Thank you.”

Hannibal sits on the floor and feeds him by hand, which makes Will’s whole body warm up with each bite. “You’re welcome, Mielasis.”

The eggs all move toward Hannibal and he touches each one smiling. “Good morning, children. I’m glad you’re getting larger. You’re doing a very good job growing.”

Will grins as he watches the eggs flutter on the water in response. “They’re happy too.”

“Yes.”

He sighs. “I gotta get up, don’t I?”

“If we wish to move the tub, yes.”

Will frowns. “They won’t fit in the sink anymore.”

“No, but the sink in the kitchen is much larger and there’s two sides. A few moments outside of the water won’t harm them.”

He nods and stands, the water dripping off him as Hannibal stares. “Don’t look at me like that.”

Hannibal smiles. “You’re a vision, it’s hard not to look.”

Will blushes. “Well...save it for later.”

“I will try.”

He steps out of the tub and Hannibal’s there to put the robe on him, tying it closed. “It’s been nice,” Will whispers, “Being in water so much.”

Hannibal kisses his neck. “It’s helped your healing, and the bond with the eggs. We thrive in water, as I’ve told you before.”

“I know, but...I always thought I’d hate it.”

“I’m glad to know otherwise.”

He smiles. “Me too.”

They take the eggs out together, and Will carries half while Hannibal takes the other. The eggs are the size of his hand now, bigger than he expected, and when he puts them in the warm sink water they seem to enjoy the room.

“I’ll tell you when we’re ready.”

“Okay.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “I’ll bring you a chair.”

“No, I…”

He touches Will’s cheek. “I’ll be right back.”

Will leans over the sink, smiling, and watches the eggs. He never thought he’d take so quickly to what are really nothing more than moving balls of green but he had. These were his eggs, his children, and he couldn’t wait to meet them.

Hannibal helps him sit when he returns and helps him sit back again. “Not long, I promise.”

“Okay.”

Will looks around the kitchen, and it feels different now.

There’s no looming worry of Leanne in the darkness, no thoughts of keeping to themselves, and as he puts his hands in the sink he smiles knowing there never will be again.

“He’s mine,” he whispers, “I had his babies...not you.”

There’s a strange sense of satisfaction that comes with saying the words, even to himself. He runs his hands over each egg, smiling, and they roll around in excitement.

“I love you,” he whispers, “All of you.”

There’s a warm feeling that comes over him and Will laughs as tears fall down his cheeks.

It’s them.

He knows it’s them.

Their bond is strong, Hannibal says, and he knows it’s them trying to respond to him. He touches them again, laughing, and stands to kiss the tops of every egg one by one.

“Will…”

He turns, smiling wide. “Can you feel it too?”

Hannibal nods, his eyes red. “This...is very unusual. They shouldn’t be able to communicate so soon.”

“They’re overachievers.”

Hannibal comes up to Will, wrapping his arms around him. “Yes, they are.”

He leans back against him and sighs. “Are you ready for us?”

“Yes.”

Will turns for a kiss that Hannibal gladly gives. “How’s Dad?”

“He’s laying down because, and I quote, ‘The game is on somewhere,’ though I hadn’t the heart to tell him there’s no television in any room other than yours. Or at least there was before we took it out.”

Will laughs. “Oops.”

“Come, let’s move the eggs.”

He picks up his three and Hannibal does the others, the two of them walking down to Will’s bedroom. The tub is now where Will’s TV and dresser had been, and when he puts the eggs inside they move around freely in the freshwater.

“Let’s lay on the bed.”

“Okay.”

Hannibal leads him to the bed and Will lays down, watching the tub, and sighs. “I’ve missed beds, I think.”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “I’ve missed you.”

“You were with me, most of the time.”

“Not *all* of the time.”

Will turns to smile at him. “You weren’t even with me in this bed *all* of the time before either.”

“I suppose.”

He kisses him. “Thank you,” he says, touching his cheek, “For putting up with my Dad, and for…”

“There’s no reason to thank me, Mielasis. I would move mountains for you if I could.”

“I know but---”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “No ‘buts’ Will. I’m telling you only the truth. You are very important to me, as are the children, and I will do anything to make sure you’re happy, healthy, and safe.”

“What about you?”

“What about me?”

“You...have you cried? Have…”

“Will…”

“I just want you to be okay too, not just us.”

Hannibal pulls Will down and kisses him again. “I’ve shed tears, yes, if that makes you feel better, and I’ve...mourned as much as I could for now. I’ve mourned members of my family before Will, and I did it alone then as well. It’s just…”

Will touches his cheeks. “You’re not alone anymore. I’m here.”

He blinks back tears as he smiles up at Will. “I know.”

“And…”

The doorbell ringing makes them both freeze, and they both strain to hear outside though his father seems to be speaking to someone with authority.

“Get dressed,” Hannibal sighs, gently rolling Will down, “I will return.”

Will throws off his robe and rushes to find clothes, his heart beating fast. He knows it’s the police, and like Hannibal says they don’t suspect them, but it’s still scaring him. He pulls on a pair of shorts and a tank top before laying back down in case someone comes to ask about him.

He stares at the tub, eyes wide, and jumps up looking around for something to cover the tub with, in case they peek inside his room. There’s nothing big enough except for his comforter, so he throws that over the tub, shaking as he looks outside.

There’s only one car, and what sounds like one person.

Will sits back on his bed, freaking out, and can barely breathe until someone knocks on his door minutes later. “Y...yes?”

His father peeks his head in. “Can I come in?”

“Yeah.”

He steps inside and frowns. “They under there?”

“I wasn’t sure if…”

“They asked Hannibal to come answer some questions about Leanne down at the station, that’s all. It’s all formality, Kid. You can uncover the grand-eggs.”

Will gets up, frowning, and pulls off the blanket putting it on his bed. “You’re sure?”

“He and I both alluded to her being a crazy bitch,” he says, “But they want a statement, that’s all, and maybe an ID? I dunno. He took a brush or somethin’ for them to check.”

“Oh.”

“It’ll be fine, Will. They were already talking about sea monsters and the like. The general guess is that there’s a new species of somethin’ out there chewin’ on people, which...they ain’t wrong.”

Will sighs and sits on the floor by the tub. “No, they’re not.”

“Will…”

“Why did you keep me?” he asks, not looking at him, “I mean...I wasn’t yours. You knew I wasn’t.”

“You’re my son, Will. That’s why I kept you, and that’s why I protected you when he came to snatch you away.”

Will looks back at him. “I’m not going home.”

“I know, Kid.”

“Do you?”

“Will…”

“This is my home, Dad, and this...is my family. You’re still their grandpa, there’s no changing that but I’m staying here with Hannibal because I love him.”

Michael sighs. “I know that too, Son.”

Will frowns. “Just three days ago you were…”

“I’ve seen the way he looks at you,” Michael says, “Ain’t nobody ever look at me like that, and probably never will. I might hate him, I might hate all this shit he’s done to get you here, but you’re here and you’re...as happy as I’ve seen you be even after...her. I know that I couldn’t take you away from him even if I tried.”

He nods, sniffling. “Okay.”

“But I want to be here,” he says, “I can move the shop, I can do whatever wherever. All I need is space, and a house to live in. That’s all.”

Will smiles. “You can have this one,” he says, “I don’t want to let this house go but...I can’t live here. Not after everything, and there’s a lot of good memories here for us.”

“Do I wanna know?”

“Probably not,” he laughs.

“But you can have it, I’m sure Hannibal would give it to you.”

Michael nods. “We’ll see.”

Will stands up and walks over to his father, throwing his arms around him. “I’m glad you’re here, Dad.”

He hugs him back tight. “So am I.”

They sit with the eggs a little longer, talking mostly about back home and Will in between checks on the eggs even though they can’t really get into much trouble.

“You’re spoilin’ em,” his father jokes, “Those six kids are gonna be so spoiled, I already can tell.”

Will smiles. “They deserve to be spoiled.”

“I’ll give you that.”

“And…”

The sound of a car door closing makes Will suddenly take off running out of the room. He goes down the hall and races for the door just as Hannibal steps into the house. The minute he closes the door Will launches himself at him, smashing their mouths together. Hannibal growls, pulling him in, and they fall to the couch just as his father yells out.

“I KNOW WHAT YOU’RE DOING IN THERE AND YOU BETTER NOT DO IT WHERE I CAN HEAR!”

Will laughs, pulling back, and blushes. “WE WEREN’T GONNA DO ANYTHING!”

“We weren’t?”

He shakes his head at him. “Not yet, no,” he teases, frowning, “Not until I’m ready.”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “I was kidding, Mielasis, I wouldn’t expect anything so soon.”

Will’s chest aches. “I…”

He kisses Will softly. “Let’s relieve him and get time alone. I can tell you both what happened.”

He sighs. “Ok.”

They head down the hall and to the bedroom where Michael glares at them. “Not gonna do anything my ass.”

“Dad…”

“I told ya I won’t try to part you two, but I won’t listen to that while I’m staying with you. Nope! I will *not* .”

Will blushes. “We weren’t.”

His father shakes his head and leans against the doorway as they sit. “Yeah, yeah, sure. What happened at the police station?”

“They asked me about Leanne, and...showed me some jewelry she had on when they found her that I identified. They had previously found her through DNA samples from a drunk driving incident a few years prior, but they wanted me to solidify it was her. I also told them

about her increased mental state, and said I suspected she was drunk at the time of her death. They didn't question that, and I think for now it's over. They promised to tell me their findings soon."

Will lays his head on Hannibal's shoulder and squeezes his hand. "Good."

"It seems too cookie cutter."

"They don't know Will or I are part sea creature, Mr. Graham. If they did then yes, they would suspect us, but they think it was just an accident. I assured them Leanne and I were madly in love."

Will growls. "Don't."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "I apologize, Will, I should not have spoken that in front of you."

"It's fine, I just…"

His father groans. "Oh geez, I can't deal with this. I'm gonna go order something."

"I can make dinner, if you'd like."

He glares at Hannibal. "No thank you."

The sound of his shoes as he stomps down the hall makes Will wince. "Sorry about him."

"That was a much better interaction than they have been as of late so that must be he's warming to me, yes?" He teases.

Will kisses his cheek. "Not gonna happen."

“We’ll see.”

Hannibal pulls Will down onto the bed and they cuddle close, nuzzling each other.

“I was worried.”

“I apologize for your worry.”

“I love you,” Will whispers, kissing him again.

“I love you too,” Hannibal says, pulling Will into a hug.

He buries his face into Hannibal’s neck and breathes him in.

“It’s almost over,” Hannibal whispers, “Then all we have is the hatching to come and our...monster marriage.”

Will smiles. “I can’t wait.”

“Neither can I.”

Chapter 64

Dinner is just the two of them together in his bedroom after Will's father declines more than once. Hannibal brings them braised bass, smothered in some sort of heavy sweet sauce, and broccoli with melted cheese. He eats practically glued to Hannibal's side, which he seems just fine with, and when he's finished Will climbs into his lap.

"Did you enjoy dinner?"

"Mmm," he sighs, smiling, "Yeah, I always do."

Hannibal brushes the hair from his face. "It's nice to see you out of the tub. I was growing quite concerned."

Will shakes his head. "I'm fine."

"You'll never be fine with what happened, Will, and I understand that because I won't be either. But I want you to be happy, that's all I want."

He smiles and kisses him. "I'm happy with you," he whispers, nuzzling his chin, "I'm happy that we don't have to sneak around or....hide. I'm happy that...she's gone."

Hannibal nods. "As am I."

"And I'm happy that the eggs are getting bigger, and even though he doesn't like you I missed my Dad so it's nice he's here."

"I'm glad his being here helps you in any way, and I hope he continues to want to be a part of your life after the children are born."

Will bites his lip. “I sort of...told him he could have this house. I know it’s not my house, but I don’t want to raise the babies here but I also don’t want someone else to be here when the others…I just don’t.”

Hannibal puts both his hands on Will’s cheeks. “As long as you’re happy that’s just fine with me, Will. I suspect we’ll have to renovate the other house to make room for all the children but I’m ok with that as well.”

Will frowns. “You’re sure?”

“Yes, of course.”

He throws his arms around Hannibal’s neck and kisses his shoulder. “I love you.”

“I love you.”

Will lifts up his hand and drops shift, staring at the claws on his webbed fingers. “Just a few weeks ago I never would’ve been able to do this and feel...normal.”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “You’re anything but normal, Mielais, and that’s just fine. We don’t have to be like them.”

He watches Hannibal drop shift and their hands match, which makes his whole body grow warm. “I don’t want to be,” he whispers, squeezing his hand, “Not anymore.”

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek and kisses him hard, biting his tongue as Will wiggles in his lap. The familiar feeling ache makes him hum, the wetness at his backside spreading as he continues.

“Will…”

He doesn't stop, deepening the kiss as he feels Hannibal harden under him. The need to be closer makes him whimper, and just as he moves to pull down his sweats a loud splash makes them both turn.

The eggs seem oddly lively as they roll around, almost like they're aware even from across the room, and Will blushes as he climbs off Hannibal's lap. "What are they doing?"

"Your connection is strong," Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, "They can feel you."

Will blinks. "Wait....so they can feel…"

"They can't feel what you're doing, but they can feel your emotional state, yes. You're happy, they're happy, and so on. As I've said, the connection is very strong, especially for still being unhatched."

"Is that gonna be forever? Like...I dunno...I mean were you connected to your…"

Hannibal takes his hand and squeezes. "Yes, I had a connection with both my parents. Mother more than father, naturally, but it fades as you grow. They need you now more when they're younger so their biology acts accordingly."

Will suddenly loses all the heat he felt earlier. "So that's why I still...feel...like I'm missing something?"

Hannibal kisses his hand. "Yes," he whispers, "It will fade, Will, but never truly go away."

Will leans against him. "Oh."

"I take it you're no longer amorous?"

He shakes his head and looks at him. “I’m sorry I just---”

Hannibal kisses him softly again, and Will sighs when he pulls away. “Don’t apologize. Talk of my family didn’t help matters either.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize.”

“Hannibal…”

He wraps his arm tighter around Will and hums softly. Will closes his eyes and feels like they’re connected already. “We have a lifetime, Will. There’s no need to rush.”

The eggs seem to calm down, though they droop a bit under the water, and Will smiles.

“Do you remember that monster story you told me? About the guy who fell in the water?”

Hannibal kisses his temple. “Yes, I remember.”

“I’m glad I fell,” he whispers, laying his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, “I really am glad I fell.”

“Will…”

“I want to monster marry you,” he whispers, “I want...I want all of it. All you can give me, I want it. If we have twenty kids, I don’t care, I just…”

Something touches Will’s arm and he knows it’s not either of Hannibal’s hands. “We’ll find someone that suits us, I promise.”

He pulls them down onto the bed and Hannibal moves till they hit the pillows. Will takes off his shirt and pants, eager to get close again, and watches as Hannibal does the same. It's late, later than he expected, and suddenly he feels like he could sleep for a week.

"Would you like to hear another story?"

"Please."

Hannibal brushes the curls from Will's forehead and he sighs.

"There was once a monster who wanted very much to start a family and find his mate, but no one seemed worthy. He spent countless years searching until he was certain there was no one who could be his match. Then one day he smelled something wonderful that was his mate. He knew it was his but the scent did not come from his mate, it was from the demon who birthed him. He spent what felt like eons trying to convince the demon to bring his mate to him and then one day...there he was. Beautiful, perfect, and uninformed of his true nature. The monster ached for him, but took his time while his mate…"

"Ached for him," Will whispers, a tear falling down his face, "His mate ached for him so badly he wanted to kill the demon."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "Yes, and...eventually...his mate did. They had kept their love in the shadows, away from prying eyes, but once the demon was gone and their children were freed...they lived happily ever after."

Will lifts his head and stares down at him. "Are you sure? What if something else happens? What if…"

He put his finger across Will's lips. "Then we'll fight the next demon together."

Will moves his hand away and kisses him again. “And no one will stand in our way.”

“No one.”

He nuzzles Hannibal’s cheek, his eyes heavy, and soon Hannibal’s hum lulls him to sleep. Will wakes up to Hannibal whispering in the dark, and he listens but doesn’t move.

“We’ll have to get a bigger tub soon,” he whispers, “We can’t have you rolling out like this again. I know you’re eager to be near your father, and he feels the same but once you’re hatched you’ll be close to him always. You’re doing so well, little ones. So well.”

Will smiles as he feels Hannibal come back to bed, and moves against him as Hannibal pulls them together. “How did you know?”

“I heard the splash.”

I didn’t hear anything.”

“You were tired.”

“Is the floor all wet?”

“A bit, yes.”

Will sighs as his eyes grow heavy again. “They might not need the whole month.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Perhaps, but we’ll see what happens.”

He falls asleep again and wakes up alone. The eggs are quiet when he sits up, though he can see them above the rim of the tub. “Maybe the water is too high,” he mumbles, “Or do you like it that way?”

The eggs all start to move at his voice and he smiles, climbing out of bed to sit on the floor by the tub. He touches all six eggs one by one, and they move as his fingers brush them.

“I think you like it.”

They roll around some more and Will lays his head on the edge to watch.

“I expected you to be watching them when I returned,” Hannibal says, making him smile, “Did another fall out?”

“No, they’re just bein’ rowdy.”

“I see.”

“Is Dad awake?”

“Your father is looking through the garage at Leanne’s things,” Hannibal says, making Will frown, “He doesn’t want to be disturbed.”

Will lifts his head and sees Hannibal brought a tray of something. “What kind of things?”

“Old pictures, and I think she had some diaries? I never really looked at her things, nor do I care to.”

He stands up. “I’m gonna check on him.”

Hannibal frowns. “I’ve brought breakfast.”

Will kisses his cheek. “I can reheat it. I won’t be gone long.”

“Alright,” he sighs, “But please hurry.”

“I will.”

He pulls on some shorts and heads down the hall before pulling on his shoes at the door. It’s been days since he’s been outside, but the warm sun is nice as he heads for the garage side door. His father is sitting at a table, surrounded by boxes, and doesn’t seem to hear him.

“Dad?”

Michael startles, dropping a book in his hands, and frowns at Will. “Scared the shit outta me, Kid.”

“Sorry, I was just...are you ok?”

He sighs, rubbing a hand over the back of his neck. “Yeah, I’m fine.”

“Did you...is there anything about me?”

Michael frowns. “Some things, but not much. I made a pile of things to burn.”

Will sees a stack of books sitting to the edge of the table. “Are those…”

“Diaries, yeah.”

Will grabs the first one, but doesn’t open it. “She talks about me?”

“A little bit, yeah, but nothin’ you want to read. I don’t think she remembered much until…”

He opens the first page.

The first line makes his chest ache.

I never should have got married.

He closes the book. “Why are you doing this to yourself?”

“I wanted to be sure if the cops came back that there’s nothin’ that would...put you or the grand-eggs in danger. She might’ve remembered somethin’ about the guy and what happened so I just…”

Will walks over and hugs his father with one arm. “I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, Son.”

“Don’t stay out here all day.”

“I won’t.”

“Hannibal made breakfast.”

“I got my coffee, I’m fine.”

Will leaves him alone again, and heads for the door until he stops to take in the view. The lake calls to him, like it has for weeks, but his children’s call is louder. He turns away and goes back inside to find Hannibal on the floor eating.

“Is everything alright?”

He nods, sitting by his side. “He’s just...checking to be sure she didn’t mention me or my...other dad.”

“I see.”

“He’s fine.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I’ve been watching the eggs swim,” Hannibal says, smiling, “They’re going to be hard to keep close to shore once they get their tails.”

Will laughs. “We definitely need that pool.”

“Indeed.”

They share breakfast, feeding each other back and forth until it’s all gone. Will hears his phone buzz and gets up after Hannibal moves the tray.

Can I come over again? Pleeeeasse?

Sure.

I'll be there in ten minutes.

He sets the phone down and smiles at Hannibal. "Bev wants to come over."

"I'll let the two of you have your time together."

"You can stay," Will says, frowning, "I'd like you to stay."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, please."

Hannibal gets up on the bed and Will lays down on him. He rubs Will's back and hums softly.

"There's a discussion we need to have later."

Will frowns. "Oh?"

"We haven't thought of any names yet."

He smiles. "Oh, yeah we...we should."

He kisses the top of Will's head. "After Beverly leaves."

Will sighs. "Ok, but you're sure no Michael?"

Hannibal holds him tighter. “Perhaps a middle name, if he’s more cordial to me before they hatch.”

Will laughs. “We’ll see.”

Chapter 65

They finish breakfast and Will can't resist dipping his feet into the tub. He misses being close to the eggs, almost compelled to climb all the way in, but there will be little room for them to grow if he's in the way. Hannibal rubs his shoulders as they watch the eggs together, and he kisses Will's forehead smiling down at him.

"I'll look for a larger tub this afternoon."

"It won't fit in here, we'd…"

He touches Will's cheek softly. "We'll make room."

Will leans up for a kiss he gladly gives, and climbs out of the tub when he feels the urge to get closer to him instead. Hannibal pulls him closer, backing up until they hit the edge of the bed, and when they fall down onto it they're both growling. He pulls at Hannibal's shirt, needy and wet, and when he puts his hand on Will's wrist the annoyed whine Will gives in return makes him smile.

"Beverly is coming, is she not?"

"But…"

Hannibal kisses him softly. "I'm excited for your eagerness so soon, Mielasis, but I don't think you want to give Beverly a show."

He nuzzles Hannibal's cheek, and pulls back still staring at Hannibal holding his wrist.

"I never asked you something, this...it's...I kept getting these blue marks on me for the longest time and then they just stopped? I thought it was because you were holding me too

hard but--”

Hannibal rubs his wrist softly, lifting it up to kiss. “The blue marks were my way of...marking...you while we were not yet together. I apologize if I worried you, it was not intentional, they were instinctual. They disappeared because I thought we were on the way to mating, and my insecurities faded considerably.”

Will smiles. “So...you left blue on me because you couldn’t kiss me yet?”

Hannibal kisses his wrist again and smiles. “Yes.”

“That’s so weird and...so cute.”

He climbs into Hannibal’s lap again and sighs when Hannibal gently keeps him back. “Beverly.”

Will sighs and grabs his phone. “She should’ve been here by now, where is she?”

He finds no messages from her and frowns. “Will?”

“She didn’t text or anything and it’s been like twenty minutes.”

Will puts the phone to his ear and taps his leg impatiently when he calls Bev. She doesn’t answer, which only makes things worse, and Will finds himself halfway down the hall before his phone rings.

“Bev, where are you?”

“You won’t even believe me if I told you,” Bev mumbles, “I’m heading up your driveway now. Hold on.”

Will ends the call and steps outside just as she pulls into the driveway. He frowns. “What’s going on?”

“Molly showed up at my house right after I texted you.”

“And?”

Bev rolls her eyes. “She’s still whining because no one will talk to her since the ‘murder party’ and started crying to me because I dated her ‘bestie’ Abby and I totally get what she’s talking about because of it or something. I don’t know. I told her to leave me alone, and she cried on me for like ten minutes till Mom let me get away. You guys have any coffee or something? I need a caffeine boost.”

Will nods. “Yeah, sure. C’mon.”

He leads into the house and through to the kitchen starting up some coffee. “Molly’s really still got no friends?”

“She deserves it, she’s annoying,” Bev says, leaning against the counter, “Enough about her, let’s talk about you. How are you?”

Will smiles. “I’m ok.”

“Good. And all the stuff with...you know who?”

“Same as the Hobbs family,” Will says with a sigh, “Sea creatures of ‘unknown’ origin, or something like that. Hannibal says we’re fine. Leanne’s got no family, and he asked them to cremate her. I’m not even sure what we’ll do with the ashes.”

“Flush them down the toilet.”

Will laughs. “Maybe.”

Bev smiles. “And the eggs?”

“They’re getting bigger, and Hannibal’s gonna get us a bigger place to keep them so I can...be in the water.”

“Aww.”

Will blushes. “Shut up.”

Bev pulls him into a hug and he lays his head on her shoulder. “Never. Your sugar monster makes you happy and...hey at least one of us is.”

He moves away to frown at her. “Bev…”

“It’s ok, Will.”

“Is there anything I can do?”

She shakes her head. “No, I’m just a little sad. Mom wants me to go to a shrink.”

“Maybe it’s not a bad idea?”

Bev rolls her eyes. “It is a bad idea,” she mumbles, “I mean what do I need to do that for?”

The coffee maker spills out coffee into the carafe and Will grabs a cup down for her. “It’s someone to talk to who’s not a part of all of it.”

“And I’m just gonna tell them what? That my friend is a monster, that my dead girlfriend and her dad tried to kill me to get to him and now he’s got eggs he laid in his bathtub?”

Will laughs. “No, but…” he hands her the mug and points to the sugar, creamer, and everything else Hannibal has in little containers, “You can tell them you’re sad and they can help a little.”

Bev stirs her coffee with tears in her eyes. “Maybe.”

“And hey maybe you’ll meet someone nice sitting in the waiting room, or even at the Starbucks on the way!”

She grins, wiping her eyes. “Oh shut up.”

He sticks out his tongue. “C’mon, the tadpoles are waiting.”

They walk down the hall and Bev waves to Hannibal when they head for the tub. “How are the little ones?”

“Rather still until now,” he says, “I think they heard Will’s voice.”

“Aww! That’s so cute!”

Will kneels down next to the tub and touches every single one. “You miss me?”

They roll, like always, and he can almost feel how excited they are to have him in the room again.

“They’re gonna be runners,” Bev says, “Or just really fast swimmers.”

“Yeah,” he sighs, “I can’t wait.”

“Did you think of names yet?”

Will looks up at Hannibal. “We thought about that earlier,” he says, “We haven’t really even started yet.”

“You really should,” she says, touching the nearest one, “Can I pick one up?”

He bites his lip. “Um…”

“Perhaps when they’re older,” Hannibal says, “Not just yet.”

“Oh.”

“How’s your dad taking all this?”

“He’s been in the garage all morning,” Will sighs, “Looking through Leanne’s stuff.”

Bev frowns. “Why?”

Hannibal sits on the bed. “Michael says it’s to find things to burn that might mention Will’s birth origin if the police decide to investigate further. I don’t think they will.”

“Why?”

“Because both Matthew Brown and the Hobbs family died nearly the same as Leanne and those cases have all been closed.”

“True but…”

Will sighs, “Can we *not* talk about Leanne?”

“Sorry, Will.”

“It’s fine, I just….want to think about happy stuff right now, ok?”

“Ok,” Bev says, frowning, “Sorry.”

“It’s fine.”

“Beverly, are you staying for lunch?”

“I mean, if Will wants me to stay.”

“Why wouldn’t I want you to stay?”

“I just…”

Hannibal gets up from the bed and walks over to the door. “I know you said you wanted me to stay but I think perhaps you need some time to yourselves. I’ll go check on Michael.”

“But…”

“No, stay!” Bev says, “Honestly I’m just…it’s fine! I’m being weird, it’s all the Molly stuff.”

Hannibal frowns. “Molly? As in Foster?”

Will sighs. “Molly came to see Bev before she got here and said she’s lonely.”

“Oh, I see.”

“Bev had to deal with her crying all over her and stuff.”

“That’s...unfortunate.”

Bev looks between the two of them. “How do you know about Molly?” she asks Hannibal, “I didn’t think you knew her.

He frowns. “Will and she had...some moments together.”

Will smiles. “That *you* ruined.”

“And I would again.”

He laughs.

“Ohhh was that when you were pretending to be two people?”

Hannibal frowns. “Yes, but I...had reasons that were…”

“Bad?” she asks.

He sighs. “I’ll leave the two of you for now. I think perhaps I’m a bit too…”

“Old?” Bev asks.

Hannibal glares at her. “Perhaps Beverly needs to be stricken off the name list as well.”

Her eyes widen. “No, no, no! I’ll be good!”

He turns and leaves while she stares after him sadly. “He’s kidding, right?” she asks, looking over at Will, “Right?”

He grins. “He’s kidding.”

“Because I do think he’s old, but it’s a good old. Like...I dunno....what’s a good old thing?”

Will laughs. “Bev…”

“Santa! Santa is…”

He buries his head in his hands as he laughs, and the eggs must be excited because the water splashes him.

“Oh! That’s....what are they doing?”

Will blushes. “I was happy, and Hannibal says they can pick up on that.”

Bev puts her arm around him. “That...is adorable but I assume very inconvenient.”

He smiles. “It’s...I don’t know how to describe it?”

“Good?”

“That’s a given, but yeah it’s good. Everything right now is just...good.”

Bev sighs again and puts her hand in the tub. “But wouldn’t your life be even better if you had a baby sea monster named Beverly?”

He laughs. “We’ll see.”

“I’m just sayin’!”

A knock makes them both turn to look as Hannibal peeks in. “Are you staying for lunch, Beverly?”

“Well...I *was* until you threatened not to name any babies after me.”

Hannibal smiles. “Perhaps I...misspoke?”

She stands and heads for Will’s bed, sighing as she lays down. “Do you guys mind if I just hang out a little? You can go do whatever you want but I can look after the eggs. I mean, not much happens right?”

“They have been known to fall out of the tub but it’s happened very little.”

Bev smiles. “So then it’s all good! You can go have a baby name discussion or a romantic monster swim and I’ll just chill out as Cool Egg Auntie.”

Will frowns. “I don’t know, that’s...I mean…”

Hannibal comes into the room and holds his hand out for Will who stares up at him. “Your father is here if anything happens, and I highly doubt anything serious will happen if we take a swim. We won’t be gone long.”

Will takes his hand and stands, still unsure. “Make sure to talk to them a lot, they like that, and don’t leave the room.”

Bev smiles. “I promise.”

Will walks out into the hall and closes the door staring at the doorknob. This is the first time he’s been away from the eggs in four days, and it feels weird. Hannibal hugs him from behind and kisses Will’s neck. “Will...we can stay, if you’d like.”

He shakes his head. “No, I...I think I need a swim, even if it’s just for a second.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Then let’s hurry.”

They waste no time rushing out of the house, ripping off clothes as they go and jumping into the water. Will hasn't felt the lake water in what feels like forever, and the calm that comes over him is immediate. He smiles at Hannibal.

Race you?

Please.

He takes off in a flash, dropping shift, and Hannibal is there within seconds wrapping his webbed hands around him as his tail brushes Will's. Will kisses him, teasing a bite to his lower lip, and then takes off again.

There's a destination he has in mind.

The cave is right where they left it, clean now, and when he resurfaces Will looks around in appreciation. There's nothing left to show Matt was there at all, and when he walks up to the rocks he smiles as he touches them.

"I've missed seeing you here."

He smiles at him. "I've missed being here."

Hannibal swims up to him, his red eyes so different yet exactly the same as they are when he's in his person suit. Will touches his blue cheek, and leans in to lick at his skin. "I missed...tasting you."

He hears Hannibal growl. "Will…"

"Sit on the rocks."

Hannibal hops up onto the rocks and his cock is hard already. Will's never tasted him like this before, and maybe shouldn't start this way, but he needs it. He needs to taste and hear him right now.

He licks up slowly, watching Hannibal's every reaction, and before he can even move to circle his tongue Hannibal tenses up, groaning. "Will...I'm not sure if...this...I'm sorry I may not last."

Will moves down fast, sucking on the tip, and when he moves to take Hannibal's hardness into his mouth Hannibal moans, pulling his hair hard. "Will, I'm...very close."

He sucks harder, desperate now, and when Hannibal cries out spilling into his mouth he swallows all he can almost gagging. Hannibal pulls his hair harder and he moves back, his whole body on fire, and Hannibal pulls him into his lap to smash their mouths together.

Will hums, and Hannibal joins only a moment before he pulls away. He touches Will's cheek, and his shift flickers back. "You are...magnificent."

He sighs. "Hannibal, please, I'm…"

Hannibal lays back, his head hitting the rock, and stares up at him. "Use me, Mielasis. Take your pleasure."

He opens his mouth and Will's shaking as he moves up to straddle his neck. "You're sure?"

"Please, Will. I need...I have to taste you."

Will leans forward as Hannibal relaxes his mouth. He thrusts in slowly, moaning as Hannibal grips his hips, and then starts to move. He's so wet he's dripping down Hannibal's neck,and when he feels a finger he cries out nearly tumbling off the rocks.

“I can’t...oh god…”

Hannibal groans, moving in tandem, and it doesn’t take long for Will to feel the familiar tension just before he comes. He pulls back even as Hannibal holds him there, eyes glowing, and Will leans back on his hand as he hums. “I love you, oh god…”

He nearly falls off as Hannibal pulls away, gripping him hard as they kiss again.

Will hasn’t felt so complete in days, and when they break for breath he wraps his arms around Hannibal’s neck. Tears fall down his face as he bites down hard, and Hannibal does the same.

I love you.

I love you.

They sit there panting in each other’s arms for what feels like forever until he sighs lifting his head. “We have to go back.”

“I know, Will.”

“I’m sorry, I…”

He kisses him again. “Don’t apologize. Let’s just swim.”

They jump into the water again, this time taking it slow, and when they resurface neither bothers to put on their clothes when they come inside. Will finds a towel for each of them before they get to the bedroom, and Bev is wiping the floor with a towel when they come into the room.

“Judging by the amount of water the eggs threw all over the room while you were gone, I think *maybe* you had a good time?”

Will blushes. “Um...sorry?”

She smiles. “You’re lucky I love you, but...I think I’m gonna skip lunch and talk to Mom about that shrink thing.”

Hannibal frowns. “Shrink?”

“Bev’s mom wants her to see a psychiatrist.”

“I can send you recommendations, if you’d like? I know many in the area.”

She blinks. “Really? That’s...that’s awesome!”

Bev hugs Hannibal who just stands there seeming confused as he hugs back. “You’re very welcome.”

“I’m gonna go,” Bev says, “But Will’s got my number. Remember...Beverly is a *very* good name for a sea monster.”

They both smile. “Perhaps,” Hannibal says.

She grins. “That was NOT a no!”

“No, it wasn’t.”

Bev shakes both her fists up in the air. “I’ll take it!” she says, laughing, “I’ll see you guys later. Please, please call me if they start to hatch early or at all. I’m not missing this!”

“I promise!”

They watch her go to the car, and Will lays his head on Hannibal’s shoulder. “So...we’re agreed? The first one is…”

Hannibal takes his hand and brings it to his lips. “Beverly.”

Chapter 66

They have tuna fish sandwiches for lunch after Bev leaves, and Will's dad eats one despite still not leaving the garage. He has a bigger pile next to him now and Will resists the urge to look at anything heading back to the bedroom. Hannibal is on the bed looking through a tablet, and Will lays down beside him.

"What're you looking at?"

"Bigger tubs. I think this one might fit?"

Will looks over his shoulder. "If we get rid of the bed, yeah," he laughs, "I mean…"

"We can always move the bed back in after the children have all hatched, Will, it wouldn't be a problem."

He shakes his head. "I mean, I like sleeping with them but the bed is nice too. Maybe something a little smaller?"

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "I'll keep looking."

They spend the rest of the afternoon just lying together, and Will dozes after a while though he wakes to find Hannibal still looking on the tablet.

"Did you find one yet?"

"No, I've been looking at names and their meanings while you slept."

He smiles. “Any good ones?”

“Oh yes, I particularly like Desdemona, though it’s meaning is rather dark so I suppose not.”

Will makes a face. “I’m not naming one of my children that.”

“I suppose you’d want something a bit more traditional, and that would fit in with Beverly.”

“Yes.”

“I rather like Dylan, as well.”

Will leans over and peeks at the screen. “Son of the sea?”

“Yes, I think it’s fitting.”

“I like it,” he says, nuzzling Hannibal’s neck, “What does Beverly mean?”

“Beaver stream or meadow,” Hannibal says, rubbing the back of Will’s neck.

He smiles. “Are we gonna do all water names?”

“We don’t have to have a theme, no, but it all depends I suppose on what moves us.”

Will scrolls down the screen.

“We could end up with all boys.”

“Perhaps.”

“Or all girls.”

“Yes.”

“So, really picking any now is a little early.”

“That doesn’t mean we have to stop looking.”

“How about Dylan...Michael?”

Hannibal pauses. “I...suppose that’s not awful.”

He smiles. “That sounds like a yes.”

“It’s more of a...we’ll see.”

Will kisses his cheek. “Any others you liked?”

“I like the name Dante,” he whispers, “It means everlasting.”

“I like that,” Will whispers, turning his cheek, “I like Sebastian. I have no idea what it means but...when I was kid I had this stuffed animal from the Little Mermaid that Dad got me and I...it’s just a good memory.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “A strong name, I wouldn’t be against it. Sebastian Thane, after my father.”

Will smiles. “I like it.”

“Are there any other names you have a particular liking to?”

He shakes his head. “Not really. I just...want their names to have meaning.”

“Your name has a strong meaning,” Hannibal says, touching his cheek, “I’m sure your father put a lot of thought into choosing it.”

“Protector or something, I think.”

“Yes, and it fits you very well.”

He blushes, looking down. “I mean…”

Hannibal lifts his chin. “It does, Will. Very much. My own name's meaning is rather muddled, as ‘Baal has favored’ can be read as demonic or not depending on your own thought.”

Will nuzzles his hand. “Demonic or not, I still like it.”

He smiles. “That is all I care to hear.”

He climbs over Hannibal and lays on his chest as Hannibal hugs him tight.

“I just want them to be happy,” he says with a sigh, “That’s all I want.”

“I know, Mielasis. I know.”

“Tell me some more names.”

Hannibal holds the tablet up above Will’s back. “Liam,” he whispers, “It’s…”

He smiles. “The other half of William. Is this your way of naming a kid after me but not?”

“Perhaps, though your name is not William.”

“No, but...does it mean the same thing mine does?”

“Yes.”

He laughs. “Yeah, so...this is your way of naming one of them after me.”

“We’ll see I suppose,” he says, “As you’ve said...they could be anything.”

Will puts his ear to Hanniba’s chest and can faintly hear his heart beating. “I don’t hate it,” he mumbles.

“Good to know.”

“Any others?”

“Ethan. Strong, firm, long-lived.”

Will blinks back tears. “That one, I like that one.”

“I thought you might.”

“And?”

“Aurora means ‘new life’ and Emma means...whole.”

He lifts his head and smiles. “I like them all really,” he says, “Except for Desdemona.”

Hannibal puts both hands on his face. “Then I suppose we’ll just see what happens, won’t we?”

Will leans in to kiss him again. “Yeah.”

“Are you hungry? I can make something.”

He lays his head back down and sighs. “No, I...I like it here.”

“As you wish.”

Will looks down toward the tub, and sees the eggs are all near the edge almost like they’re watching them. He smiles. “Are you sure they can’t see out of the eggs?”

“I’m very sure.”

“I guess our kids are just weird.”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing.”

He laughs. “I guess not. If you guys were listening in on the name talk did you like any?”

They start to move in the water excitedly, and Will laughs as the floor begins to get covered in water.

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

A knock at the door makes Will turn as Hannibal calls out. “Yes?”

“You two decent in there?”

“Come in, Dad.”

Michael comes in holding a book and frowning as he notices the mess. “Having a pool party?”

“The eggs are getting rowdy.”

He smiles. “Oh. I guess I shoulda let you hang out in the water more when you were a kid.”

“Yes, you should’ve. Will would’ve experienced a more healthier…”

“Hannibal, stop.”

His father glares. “I did as best I could, old man. Just cuz you know more about sea monster shit doesn’t make you better than me.”

“No, but I would not have kept my son from something I *knew* he thrived in because I was afraid of what he might become.”

“Hey, listen here!”

Will gets up off the bed and stands between them. “Just stop, ok? You both fucked up a few times, but things are ok now! I’m happy, that’s all that matters. Right?”

His father scoffs. “Yeah, yeah.”

“I suppose.”

“So stop trying to see who loves me more, because neither of you are gonna win there. I know you both care about me, and that’s all I need. Ok?”

“Ok,” his father mumbles.

Hannibal frowns. “Yes.”

“Now, Dad...what did you bring the book in for?”

“I got a pile of books that need burnin’ and I need a lighter.”

Hannibal gets up off the bed. “I can show you.”

Will wants to ask about the book but holds himself back as they leave together. He sighs and flops down on the bed, turning to look at the tub. “You’re lucky both your parents love you,” he whispers to them.

The eggs all move around like normal and he smiles.

He doesn’t need to know about Leanne, really he doesn’t, but the thought of never seeing what’s in those journals doesn’t sit right with him. Will doesn’t want to leave the eggs but he can’t just let this happen.

So he does the only thing he can do.

Stop him.

Hannibal doesn’t answer right away, or even respond any other way, but there’s a shout just as he hears his father coming running down the hall. Michael opens the door. “Son, that old man of yours just…”

Will nods. “I know, I asked him to.”

“Will…”

“You read them,” he says, “Or at least skimmed. I...I want to know what happened. Can you tell me that, even if you don’t think I should read them?”

Michael sighs. “I...I really don’t…”

He walks up to his father and takes his arm. “Dad, please.”

“You trust me not to just make shit up on the fly?”

“Yes,” he says, “If you don’t think I should read her words then tell me in yours.”

Michael walks into the room and sits on the floor again like he did when he told Will his last story. Hannibal comes in just after, holding a stack of books he places on the dresser. Will holds out his hands and Hannibal comes back to the bed putting an arm around him.

“Your mama cheated on me, you know that,” he starts, staring down at the floor.

“Yes.”

“She didn’t really have a type, but good lookin’ fellas always caught her eye. I didn’t question it, because I wasn’t the most handsome man in the world and she was so pretty. Prettier than any other girl I’d ever seen.”

Will’s vision reddens. “She wasn’t in the end,” he whispers, “Not at all.”

“I know, son,” he says, “I seen her.”

He closes his eyes. “The journals…”

“They talk about her boyfriends, about me a little and she’s not...very nice about me. I didn’t have a lot of money but anything I did have I used to buy her pretty things when we were dating. Most of the fellas she was sleeping with didn’t even do that, you know.”

“Dad…”

“One fella she said was the best lookin’ man she’d ever seen, and he...he hung around her a lot for a few pages. Many, many pages. They didn’t even fool around, just had drinks and flirted. She didn’t even know his name cuz he never gave it.”

Will looks at Hannibal, who frowns. “Many of our kind seduce and then...impregnate.”

“Kinda like you did to Will?” Michael snaps.

“Dad!”

“I’m not wrong, son,” he says, “Am I?”

Hannibal’s arm tightens around him. “I will admit I thought of Will as a viable mate before I fell in love with him. I wanted him to want me, yes, but I resisted taking what I knew I could have almost immediately.”

Michael glares at him. “Why?”

“Because as things progressed I want him to trust and love me more than anything else.”

Will kisses his cheek. “I do.”

Hannibal smiles. “I know.”

A groan makes them both look at his father again. “Can I continue?”

“Yes, I suppose.”

“This fella she was flirting with, he finally took her to a hotel and they did the deed all night. The best night of her life, she says, and then he just...was gone. No more flirting, and her belly got bigger. Too big to be normal, and she thought about...things, but was scared to go to a doctor so she just hid.”

Will feels tears in his eyes. “Until she killed them all.”

“Yeah, son.”

“And just...after? Were there any after?”

His father frowns. “Will…”

“Did she just forget?”

“Yeah, kid, she knew what she wanted and it wasn’t you.”

He sniffles, wiping his eyes. “And were there any when I was here now?”

Michael nods. “Just one. She didn’t like you at all, and was really angry at how much your old man ignored her. It got harder to read by the last pages but...whatever happened to her wasn’t pretty.”

Will buries his face against Hannibal’s neck and Hannibal pulls him close. “Thank you, Michael,” he says, “I think...you can dispose of them now.”

“Alright,” he sighs, “I’ll get us a pizza or somethin?”

“That sounds just fine.”

When he's gone Will can't help but bite down on Hannibal's neck. He doesn't know why he needs to, but Hannibal shivers pulling him closer as he does the same. The sting of it helps him feel better, and when he lifts his head he kisses him with blood on his tongue.

"Will…"

"I guess the reason I'm so pretty is cuz they were too," he laughs, as tears fall down his face.

Hannibal brushes tears from his cheeks. "You're beautiful because of you, not just them," he whispers, "Both of your forms are...exquisite. Leanne and your birth father didn't make you into the man you are, that was not their doing. You are the most...perfect...creature, and while the way you were brought into his world wasn't ideal I am thankful it happened."

Will kisses him again, pushing Hannibal down onto the bed and pulling at his clothes. He growls when he frees his cock, and strokes as their tongues brush against each other. Hannibal takes him in hand and Will whimpers, thrusting against his palm, and when they both come he can hear the water from the tub falling to the floor. Hannibal pulls back to bite his neck again and Will lets out a sob, clutching hard to him.

I love you so much.

I love you too.

They collapse together, panting for breath, and he turns to see the eggs are all swimming wildly.

"They're happy."

"Yes," he whispers, kissing Will's cheek, "And so am I."

Will closes his eyes. “Me too,” he says, his voice thick, “So, so happy.”

They’ve got a lot more to deal with, yes, but for now they have each other.

That’s all that matters.

Chapter 67

The next morning Will knows something's wrong by the look on Hannibal's face when he comes in with breakfast. "What?"

"Your father isn't here."

Will blinks. "What?"

"The car is gone, and he hasn't left a note. He did tell you he'd stay, yes?"

His chest aches as he pulls out his phone and sees no messages. "Yeah."

"Perhaps he's just gone to the store."

Will frowns. "Why wouldn't he leave a note?"

"I'm not sure, but you can call him if you'd like."

He does just that, keeping the phone to his ear, and when there's no answer he doesn't bother to leave a message. Dad doesn't check his voicemail. He texts.

Where are you?

Will waits for a minute, concerned, and a reply comes fast.

Had to pick a few things up, Kid. Don't worry I'll be back to the house later.

He sighs. “He’s coming back later.”

“Oh, well that’s…”

“Where would he go?” Will mumbles, as Hannibal puts the tray down, “And why wouldn’t he at least leave a note?”

“Perhaps he’s surprising you with something.”

He scoffs. “My dad? He never could keep a surprise to himself my whole life. My being a sea monster was the biggest secret he ever kept.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Don’t worry about this, Will. I’m sure he’s fine. I brought you strawberry peanut butter pancakes today and strawberry orange juice.”

Will smiles. “When did you have time to go shopping?”

“Grocery stores are open late, and you fell asleep early.”

He takes a bite and moans as the combination of taste touches his tongue. “Mmmm!”

“Good?”

Will nods and holds out a forkful for Hannibal to taste. He runs his tongue over the tines, never looking away from Will, and licks his lips. “I have begun to enjoy the combination.”

He smiles. “I’m happy to have shown you new flavor combos to like.”

Hannibal kisses him then, running his fingers across the back of Will's neck,and when they part he kisses his forehead. "You've shown me many things, Mielasis, and I've enjoyed them all."

Will sighs. "Me too."

"Now…" Hannibal says, picking up the fork again for him, "Take a bite."

Will does as he's told, making sure to lick his lips with every bite, and before long they're making out again. He drops shift fast, digging his claws into Hannibal's back, and his tentacles tease across Will's boxers.

"Please," he growls, "Please, Hannibal I need…"

They pull down Will's boxers as Hannibal begins to kiss down his chest, and he's writhing on the bed dripping with pleasure just as they're interrupted.

"Hey, I've got...holy fuck no!"

Will pushes Hannibal off of him as his father retreats, and he's shaking when he covers his face.

"Shit."

"Will."

He puts his human form back, still covering his face, and doesn't speak.

“This is not the first time he’s seen us naked.”

“It is the first time he’s seen us naked as sea monsters AND your tentacles out!”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “He knows what we are, Will, and he’s going to have to come to terms with the idea we’re intimate.”

Will groans and gets off the bed, pulling his boxers back up. “I’m gonna go talk to him.”

“Will…”

He leans over the bed and kisses Hannibal softly, his fingers brushing Hannibal’s cheek. “I’m not upset, but I know he is. He’s my dad, Hannibal, I can’t just pretend this is normal.”

Hannibal frowns. “I know. I just don’t particularly enjoy you feeling badly for who you are.”

He sighs. “I’ll be right back.”

Will heads down the hall to the living room but Michael’s not there so he goes through both the dining room and kitchen. Both are just as empty. He sighs and heads outside, expecting to find the car gone but instead his father is sitting on the edge of the lake.

He sits down beside him. “You ok?”

“I just saw my sea monster son having sex with his sea monster boyfriend so...no.”

“We weren’t…yet.”

“That don’t make it any better, Kid.”

Will sighs, and dips his feet in the water. “Where were you?”

Michael tosses a rock into the water and Will watches it skip across with ease. “I went shopping for you.”

“Oh.”

“The stuff’s in the trunk,” he mumbles, “And I figure we can clear out the living room.”

Will blinks. “Did you get us a…”

“A pool? Yeah, I did. I figure you don’t want the eggs out in the public, so a big indoor pool is the best bet.”

He smiles as he blinks back tears. “Dad…”

“And I got some toys for the little ones. I see they like to move a lot so they can push ‘em.”

Will throws both arms around his father. “I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, Son, just...next time lock the door.”

He laughs, sniffling, and they both grin at each other. “We will.”

Michael looks back out at the lake. “It’s a nice place he’s got here.”

“Yeah, it is.”

“You sure you wanna give it up?”

Will sighs. “Yeah, I am.”

“I won’t change much, in case you end up changing your mind.”

Will lays his head on Michael’s shoulder. “Ok, Dad.”

They stare out for a while, just enjoying each other’s company, and Will aches to get in the water. He drops shift on his feet and the cool water makes him shiver happily.

“You can go swim if you wanna.”

“No, I…”

“You don’t have to hide from me, Son,” he says, patting Will’s arm, “Honestly, I’d rather see more of you that way so I can stop feelin’ so thrown off by it.”

Will looks back at the house. “I…”

“Or if you want to spend some time in there together, that’s fine too. Whatever makes you happiest, Will, that’s what I want.”

He sighs. “I gotta go back inside, I...I feel strange when I’m away for too long.”

Michael smiles. “You’re such a good dad already, you know? Your mama...she wasn’t made for it. You’re made for it, I can see every time you even *think* of them.”

Will sniffles. “Thank you.”

“I’m gonna stay here for a while,” he mumbles, “I’ll be in later to talk to your old man about the pool.”

“Ok, Dad.”

Will heads for the house and when he gets to the door he looks back. His father looks at home here already, and he’s so glad. He heads inside and goes right to Hannibal who frowns. “Is everything ok?”

“Yeah,” he says, kissing him again as he falls onto the bed, “It’s perfect.”

“He’s not angry?”

“No, just embarrassed,” Will sighs, “And he got us a pool.”

“I’m not certain that’s the best way to go about this. Anyone could see us outside and---”

Will lays his head on Hannibal’s chest. “It’s one of those outdoor pools that you set up but he thinks we can fit it in the living room if we move the furniture.”

Hannibal rubs his back. “Hmm...I suppose that would be sufficient.”

“And he got the eggs toys to push around.”

“They can’t see them.”

“No, but...I think they’d like that anyway.”

Hannibal sighs. “Yes, I suppose they have some weeks yet and they’ll need entertainment.”

Will smiles. “Are you agreeing with something my father did?”

“Don’t tell him.”

He laughs. “I won’t.”

Will drifts a little, feeling at ease, and when he hears Hannibal’s voice he’s awake again.

“…and once we’re bonded, our connection will make it next to impossible for it ever to happen again.”

His father’s voice is almost a growl.

“Did you kill the fucker?”

“I did, yes, but we both took Leanne’s life.”

“You should’ve told me.”

“My mind was not on you, Michael, it was only on finding him. I was…more monster than man.”

Will opens his eyes slowly and sees his father sitting on the floor by the door again. He smiles at Will. “Hey, Kid.”

He lets out a long breath. “I...I’m sorry I didn’t tell you.”

“Will…”

He doesn’t lift his head to look at Hannibal, and his father sighs. “You should’ve told me,” he says, “At least one of you should’ve. Will, you could’ve…”

Will feels tears fill his eyes. “I know, but...I didn’t even know how to tell you I was pregnant. How was I gonna tell you I got kidnapped by some crazy monster who wanted my eggs?”

Micheal rubs his eyes with both hands, and when he pulls them back Will can tell he’s been crying. “Your old man here says he saved you.”

Hannibal rubs his back. “Will cut himself,” Hannibal says, “And the blood alerted me to his location. I would not have found him if he didn’t.”

“Shit.”

Will lifts his head and looks at Hannibal. “You should’ve asked me first before you told him.”

“I saw the notebooks,” his father says, “Sitting out on his desk. I thought he wrote them, until they started talking about you.”

He closes his eyes. “You should’ve destroyed them.”

“Will…”

Will looks at his father. “Those books killed my children, I don’t...please just...don’t ask about it. Not any of it. It’s over, I’m home, and...our eggs are here.”

His father nods. “Okay, son, I just...I knew you wouldn’t want to talk about it, that's why I asked Hannibal.”

Will sighs and gets up from the bed. “I’m gonna go take a shower.”

“Will, please let me apologize.”

He doesn’t turn. “I’m not mad, Hannibal, I’m just...I can’t think about this right now.”

Will leaves the bedroom in tears, peeling off his clothes, and steps into the shower without waiting for it to warm up. The water doesn’t help much, but he lets his mind blank as he washes himself.

There’s so much pain in this room, he can still smell the blood, but he keeps going even as the tears fall down his face. He covers his mouth as he stands under the water, shaking as the memories of his time with Matt pour in, and before he can fall to the tub Hannibal is there to hold him.

Forgive me.

Will turns, touching his face, and smashes their mouths together as the water gets warmer. He moans as Hannibal lifts him, caring little that his father may hear, and when Hannibal turns him against the wall he groans. The first thrust is hard, bruising, and Will’s shout is swallowed by another kiss that takes his breath away. Hannibal fucks him hard, nails digging into Will’s hips as he moves, and when he pulls back he bites into Will’s neck with brutal precision.

He whimpers, covering his mouth as Hannibal's tentacles start to stroke his hardness, and he's lost in pleasure as he feels Hannibal come inside him. Will shudders, arching back, and when he's gripped hard he cries out spilling his own release against the tiles. Hannibal holds Will up to keep his knees from buckling, and he falls back into his arms.

"I'm not mad," Will gasps, "I...god I love you so much."

Hannibal kisses him again, his razor sharp teeth nipping at Will's tongue, and the taste of his own blood makes Will feel oddly safe. He holds him against the wall as he pulls back, licking down Will's neck, and they stand there under the spray in bliss.

"He's...got the eggs?"

"Yes," Hannibal whispers, kissing behind his ear, "And headphones."

Will laughs, his voice thick with emotion, and leans back against him. "I...I'm never gonna get over this, am I?"

"Pain reminds us that we're still somewhat human, doesn't it? Without pain we...would be…"

"Happy forever?"

"No," Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, "We would be emotionless, and robotic. Pain is the opposite of pleasure but it reminds us we're not nothing."

Will closes his eyes. "I hate this room."

"I know."

“I want it all gone,” Will whispers, “Take it all out and start over.”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “Yes, Mielasis. Whatever you need.”

They leave the shower and head for Hannibal’s bedroom. Will doesn’t sit on the bed but does change into Hannibal’s larger clothes before heading back to his own room. His father is staring at his phone looking at the screen with headphones in his ears while he sits on the floor next to the tub. Will smiles as he watches him, and taps his shoulder.

He pulls the headphones out. “Done?”

“Yeah,” he says, “Thanks, Dad.”

He stuffs the headphones into his pocket. “I figured you needed some time with him, and...learning all that...he may not be my favorite person but he’s not all that bad.”

Will smiles. “I’m gonna tell him you said that.”

“I’ll deny it.”

He laughs and sits on the floor beside the tub while Michael stands. “I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, son.”

Will reaches into the tub and touches all the eggs one by one. They flip and twirl in the water, and he smiles.

“Look at ‘em go.”

“Maybe we can put that pool up tonight?”

“I...uh...yeah sure, Kid.”

Hannibal clears his throat and Will looks over as his father steps aside for him to enter the bedroom. “I’m gonna go get that stuff out of the car now. You just...relax.”

Will waits for Hannibal to close the door before he says anything.

“Dad likes you,” he says, “Don’t tell him I told you.”

Hannibal smiles. “I won’t.”

He sits on the floor beside Will and touches the eggs himself. “They’re getting bigger already.”

“I think it’ll be sooner than four weeks.”

“As do I. Their growth rate is rising more and more everyday.”

Will smiles. “You hear that, kids? You’re egg prodigies.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Perhaps not prodigies, more like...overachievers.”

He laughs. “Hannibal doesn’t want all the compliments to go to your heads but...I know you’re the best eggs ever.”

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek. “How could they not be, Mielasis? They’re ours.”

Will kisses him, laughing, and Hannibal holds him tight.

He hopes he never lets go.

Chapter 68

The sound of his father cursing made Will groan. “We really should go help.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “He’s fine, Will. If he needed help he’d ask for it.”

“Hannibal…”

He holds him tighter, nipping at Will’s earlobe. “We’ll help when the water is needed.”

“How are we gonna get that much lake water into the house?”

Hannibal nuzzles his neck. “Slowly in buckets.”

Will laughs. “Hannibal, I’m serious.”

He gently lays Will onto the bed and smiles down at him. “As am I, Will. How do you think I got the water for the tub?”

Will frowns. “Seriously?”

“Of course.”

He touches his cheek. “You just…”

“Very slowly refilled a half dozen buckets over and over again.”

“We can’t just…”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “The lake water is good for them...and us. We can mix some of it, but to help the most would be pure.”

He sighs.

“It’s a lot of work.”

“Yes, but...much reward for our family.”

Will blushes. “Our family.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Our perfect, wonderful…”

A loud curse made them both freeze followed by his father’s yell.

“YOU GONNA COME IN HERE OLD MAN AND HELP ME WITH THIS SHIT?”

Hannibal smiles. “I think it’s time.”

“I can…”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “Stay with the eggs, Will, and if you fall asleep waiting you may wake in water.”

Will frowns. “I can help.”

“No need.”

He watches him go and sits up staring at the eggs in the tub. “Are you all ready for a new place to swim?”

They roll around in response, separating into different directions, and when he goes to sit on the floor beside the tub they don’t come to greet him.

“Sick of me already, huh?” he laughs, dipping his hand in the water.

The temperature is cold, which isn’t bad since Will likes the lake water any way he can have it, but he wonders if they’d like it warmer. He dips his whole hand in the water, and the eggs come closer to him. He smiles.

“I’m gonna be swimmin’ with you again soon, I promise.”

They surround his arm as best they can, and his eyes fill with tears. “I’m here, and I’m not going anywhere.”

The response is more flipping, and he gets a few splashes but it only makes him laugh.

“I’m ok! I’m fine.”

The eggs all stop moving, and he runs his hand over each one. “You’re doing so good,” he whispers, “Gonna be out soon, aren’t you?”

He can feel the heat from each one under his palm.

“You’re gonna do the living for all of them, huh?”

They don’t move, and he sniffles. “Good eggs.”

He lays his head on the edge of the tub, and soon his eyes are heavy.

“I’m just gonna rest my eyes, don’t go anywhere.”

The eggs swim away from his hand, and he gets up to lay in bed. He misses Hannibal already, and the lack of yelling from the dining room is a little concerning but he doesn’t move.

“Just for a little while.”

Will’s woken up by someone bumping into his arm. “Just a sec, I’m---”

He opens his eyes and feels Hannibal at his back as he stares at the water around him.

“I see you’re awake.”

Will sees the eggs all rolling around across the rectangular pool, and the water even in the dark is obviously from the lake. “What time is it?”

“You missed dinner,” he whispers, kissing Will’s cheek, “Your father is a bit concerned that you’re sleeping so often but I reassured him it’s natural. Your body has to restore itself.”

There’s a light that barely illuminates the room and the windows are all covered.

“No one can visit, I guess.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Do you like it?”

He smiles. “I love it.”

“Your father was...quite the perfectionist, but I suppose it was needed.”

Will swims out in front of him and the eggs all come rolling over. “They like us here too.”

“Yes, they were...quite excited.”

He smiles as they surround him, and he goes under the water for a second before resurfacing.

“You needed this as much as they did, I think.”

Will lays back and floats. “Yeah.”

“The toys are all pushed into the corner,” Hannibal, “They don’t seem to understand them without a view.”

He smiles. “They’ll get the hang of it.”

“Yes.”

“The furniture?”

“We moved it into the garage for now.”

“Oh.”

“And what if someone *does* come over? Like what if…”

Hannibal swims over to him, and pulls Will into his arms. He sighs as he nips at his neck. “We can say it’s a new form of therapy for grieving that you saw online. Though I don’t plan on allowing anyone into the house for the next three weeks other than Beverly and your father.”

Will closes his eyes. “But...they still could come.”

“Don’t waste your worry on ‘coulds’ and ‘maybes’, Will. Everything is fine.”

He sighs, laying back against Hannibal’s chest. “Okay.”

“Rest for now, Mielasis. You need the energy.”

Will feels like he’s barely closed his eyes before it’s morning again, and he wakes to his Dad tossing the toys for the eggs. He seems to be trying not to laugh as they push the water toys across the water, but Will hears him anyway.

“Mmm,” he yawns, sitting up, “What time is it?”

“Just after seven. Did I wake you?”

“No,” Will lies, “I…”

He blinks.

The eggs are bigger than they were yesterday.

He swims over to them and touches each one with his palm, barely able to cover with his hand.

“Oh shit.”

“Yes, they seem to be in a rush to greet us.”

Will turns to Hannibal, his eyes filling with tears. “This isn’t normal, is it?”

“No, but it’s not...Will, what’s wrong?”

He pulls the eggs in close to him, shaking, and barely hears Hannibal enter the pool before he starts to hum. The eggs all wiggle in his grasp but he can’t seem to stop crying, and Hannibal hugs him.

“Breathe, Will. Please, breathe.”

“They...they can’t….I can’t…”

“They’re thriving, Will. This is not a bad thing, I promise you!”

He presses his face against the nearest egg, and lets out a sob. “But…”

“Will, let them down.”

Will slowly puts the eggs down and they come up to him anyway, rushing to cuddle his chest.

“You’re upsetting them.”

He sniffles. “I was just...you said they were overachieving but…”

“Kid, your old man thinks you have super eggs. That’s all.”

Will shakes his head. “But they’re supposed to take weeks.”

“They still have time yet to ripen before hatching, but...I believe they’ll greet us sooner rather than later. This just means with our compatibility and your bond with the eggs they’re growing faster. That’s all, Will.”

He holds the eggs still. “I’m sorry if I freaked out.”

“It’s ok, Will, but I thought last night we went over this.”

“They weren’t bigger last night.”

“No, but...they’re still thriving. You can feel it, can’t you?”

He closes his eyes. “Yes.”

“Don’t worry, Mielasis. Please?”

Will lets the eggs go, and they roll away from him in all different directions. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize, Kid,” his father says, frowning, “I remember when I didn’t put you in water for a while when you were a baby and you got all weird looking. Somethin’ told me you needed a bath, and then you were just...normal. So I gave you one every night, and always made sure you took a shower.”

Will frowns. “Not really the same thing.”

“No, but...bein’ a new Dad is hard. That’s all I meant.”

“I am going to get breakfast started, and then...I think perhaps...you should go call Beverly. You could use the distraction.”

Will shakes his head. “I’m fine.”

“Will…”

“You put this pool here so I could swim with my eggs,” he growls, pushing him away hard, “So I’m gonna SWIM WITH MY EGGS!”

Hannibal lays back in the pool, panting, his eyes red. “Will, calm down. Your claws could ruin the pool.”

He lets out a long breath, shaking, and tries to calm down as he looks down at his hands. They're exposed, the shift gone, and he forces himself not to go full sea monster.

"I'm ok."

"I'm....gonna go for a drive," his father says, standing, "Will, you gotta listen to him. Ok?"

Will nods. "Yes, Dad."

"Hannibal, save me some bacon."

He walks out the door and Will covers his face with both hands. "Will."

"I'm sorry," he whispers, "I...I was fine last night about them growing, I don't…"

Hannibal puts a hand on his back. "You're still worried, Will. That's not a bad thing, caring for your children."

He turns and swims over to him, flopping onto Hannibal's chest. "I feel like one of those mountain lions attacking a bear but the bear is like...you."

"You see me as a threat?"

He frowns. "No, but...not knowing why this is happening is a threat."

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "There is...one source of information I haven't checked."

Will looks up at him. "No."

“Will…”

“Some psycho who tried to steal my babies is not gonna be my source of information on them, Hannibal. I’d rather just not know at all if I have to look at those books. The books I told you to get rid of.”

Hannibal hugs him tighter. “They may be, at times, step by step torture guides, but in others...they were illuminating.”

“I don’t want to know.”

“Even if it may explain the children’s fast growth?”

“You already said you think it’s because of our DNA and my connection to them being so strong. Even now I can tell they’re upset because of me, and I hate that.”

“They love you, Will.”

“I know, but...I want to be a source of good for them,” he whispers, laying his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, “Not upset.”

“You are, Mielasis. You very much are.”

He sighs. “Not right now I’m not.”

Hannibal lifts his chin, and smiles at him. “I could help remedy that.”

Will smiles. “How are we gonna explain the...additions...to the water?”

“We will have to find another place to...enjoy ourselves.”

Will kisses him softly, and Hannibal stands holding out a hand for him to take. He stands up fast, pulling him out of the pool and over to the floor. Hannibal growls as Will kisses him, digging nails into Will’s back. The touch of their cocks makes Will instantly wet, and he whines as Hannibal’s tentacles push into his backside.

“Fuck, Hannibal, just…”

He rolls Will onto his back fast, thrusting inside, and he stares at the pool humming as Hannibal fucks him. He groans, reaching for his cock only to get both hands pulled back by tentacles. He groans, rubbing against the floor, and Hannibal fucks him faster, biting at Will’s neck just as his orgasm is ripped from him.

Will hums, long and loud, and Hannibal’s echo brings tears to his eyes.

“Love you so much,” Will groans, “Fuck, don’t stop, don’t…”

The eggs seem to be enjoying themselves, as weird as it is to know he’s the cause of the sudden splashes, and when Hannibal finally spills inside him he holds him there.

“Don’t pull out,” he sighs, “Just...don’t.”

He kisses Will’s neck. “I won’t, Will. I promise.”

They lay there and cuddling, Hannibal kissing his wound, and Will feels calm.

“Thank you.”

“Thank your father for leaving.”

Will laughs. “I am *not* thanking my father for the sex we just had.”

Hannibal smiles against his neck. “Can I?”

“No,” he laughs, kissing Hannibal softly, “Just thank me.”

“Thank you, Will.”

“You’re welcome.”

Hannibal kisses him again. “We should get cleaned up before he returns.”

Will sighs. “Yeah.”

“Give me a moment.”

Hannibal takes off toward the kitchen and Will looks at the eggs as they move some of the bath toys around the water. He smiles. “Good eggs.”

“They seem to be getting the idea of those,” Hannibal says as he returns, laying on the floor.

“Yeah, they’re...really something.”

Hannibal wipes them both off and kisses him softly. “Better?”

Will smiles. “Much.”

“Get back in the water, I will return.”

He climbs into the pool, and goes under toward the eggs popping up to smile at them. “Boo.”

They flutter in response, bobbing under a little, and he laughs. “You’re getting the hang of it!”

“They most certainly are.”

Will smiles back at Hannibal. “Coming in?”

“Of course.”

He comes over to Will and reaches out to touch every egg with his webbed hand.

“They feel warmer as well,” he says, letting the last one go.

“You think?”

“Yes, very much.”

Will moves in closer to him, and he hugs him from behind. “We’re going to need supplies, and perhaps even return to the other house to assess the room there.”

He frowns. “Both of us?”

“I could go alone, but...I would like you to come as well. I’m sure your father would watch the eggs.”

Will bites his lip. “Yeah.”

“You don’t have to, Will, I can do it on my own.”

“No, I…”

The door opens next to them and Will’s dad comes inside with a box of donuts and coffees.

“I brought breakfast!”

Will smiles. “So much for bacon?”

Hannibal freezes. “I forgot to finish breakfast.”

He kisses his cheek. “It’s ok,” he whispers, “I like donuts.”

He sighs. “Will, they’re very unhealthy and…”

Will holds out his hand for a donut and his father gives it without question. He bites down and smiles. “I know.”

Hannibal takes a plain one, extremely plain, and shares a coffee with Will. They finish the coffee and both donuts before Will kisses Hannibal again. “I’ll go,” he says, smiling, “I’d...like to be there.”

He touches Will’s face. “It wouldn’t be the same without you.”

“Go where?”

They both turn. “We’re gonna go to the...other...house to see how much we need.”

Michael frowns. “He can’t go alone?”

“He can, but...I’m gonna go.”

“Alright,” he says, “But I’m *not* getting into the pool.”

Will laughs. “Ok, Dad.”

He reaches out to touch every one of the eggs before he stands, turning to grab his robe. Hannibal does the same, and they walk down the hall together. He kisses Will’s cheek.

“We won’t be gone long.”

Will smiles. “I know.”

He does, he really does.

Chapter 69

The drive to the other house isn't as long as Will remembers, but he still calls his Dad four times as they drive, even asking to be put on video call to check on the eggs.

"See? They're just rollin' with the toys. I told you they were fine."

Will smiles. *"I can see that, Dad."*

"Tell Hannibal we need eggs, and more of that fancy wine from a few days ago."

"If you're willing to pay for it, I will order the wine posthaste."

"Screw that!"

Will laughs. "We'll find something good, Dad. Thanks for watching the eggs."

"You're welcome. I'll see you later."

"See you later."

He hangs up his phone and watches the world go by as they drive. "How much longer?"

"Not much, Will. It's fairly close."

"I know, but…"

Hannibal takes and kisses Will's hand. "You're anxious to get back. You could've stayed behind, Will. I wouldn't have minded."

"No, no," he sighs, leaning his head on Hannibal's shoulder, "I'm fine."

"You do not seem fine to me."

"I am," he mumbles, "I just...gotta get used to being away."

Hannibal kisses his hand again. "No, you do not. If you wanted to spend every waking moment with the eggs until they hatch I wouldn't mind, nor would I if you spent that same time with them once they were born. Your happiness is everything to me, Will. Everything."

Will smiles and squeezes his hand. "I love you."

"And I love you," Hannibal whispers, his thumb brushing the top of Will's hand, "The next time you want to stay home please stay home."

"I will."

They pull up to the house not long after, and Will finds himself eager to get inside. Other than the fact that he came here after Matt this house holds nothing but good memories for him. He wants many, many more.

Hannibal lets him inside and he goes right to the bedroom they shared but doesn't walk inside. He lingers there, just staring in, and begins to walk down the hall. There's two rooms other than their own, and they're all generally average.

He walks into the second one, flips on the light, and looks around him.

“I guess we need another room maybe? Or six rooms?”

“They can share rooms for now, but yes I think three is enough. Unless you want to knock down the walls and make one big room.”

“I mean...we can fit two cribs in each and the one across the hall is slightly bigger so that could be the room for stuff like those baby changing things and diaper things?”

“I suppose so, yes,” Hannibal says, coming up and hugging him from behind, “Though I’m sure the children would like to have their own rooms eventually.”

Will smiles. “Oh yeah, I’m sure. But I know that I would’ve liked to grow up sharing a room. I had my own room and most of the time it was just….” his smile fades, “Lonely.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Perhaps you could feel what you’d lost and were mourning them in your own way.”

He closes his eyes. “Yeah.”

“Will…”

Will turns to smile at him, shaking his head. “I’m fine.”

“I apologize if I---”

He kisses him softly. “Don’t, ok? I’m good.”

“If you’re certain.”

“Very,” Will mumbles, pulling him out of the room, “So one more room for now and maybe three more in the future.”

“We could put a second floor on the house at some point.”

Will looks at the pictures on the walls as they walk back toward the kitchen. “You’d be ok with that?”

“If it was for my family? Yes.”

“And...if we had more kids?”

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek and stares at him in surprise. “You wish for more children?”

Will frowns. “You don’t?”

“Of course, I just...after the trauma of the eggs’ arrival I thought perhaps…”

He feels his chest ache as he moves in closer to Hannibal again, and kisses him softly. “I won’t let her win,” he wishes, “And I know I want more with you. I want everything with you.”

Hannibal touches his cheek and smiles. “Will…”

“I mean, not like right away? I have to get used to the idea of having six kids first but...yeah. I want more.”

“Then I will get started right away on expanding the house, and...once everything is done…”

“We’ll be home.”

Hannibal nuzzles his cheek. “Yes, Mielasis. We’ll be home.”

“Hannibal…”

“Would you...like to go for a swim, Will?”

Will pulls back, his vision red, and nods.

“Then...let’s go.”

He starts to pull off his clothes as he heads for the door, and Hannibal follows so closely behind he grabs Will before he even makes it to the water. Will kisses him, growling, and Hannibal pulls back to stare at him fully.

“You are...a vision.”

Will drops shift, and feels his back fin growing even as he stands there. “Can you catch me?”

“Always.”

Will takes off in a rush, adrenaline pumping in his veins, and when Hannibal grabs him what feels like seconds later he playfully tries to escape only to be boxed in. He stares at Hannibal’s other form, admiring, and feels tentacles brush his sides.

What are you stopping for?

I want to admire how beautiful you look in the water.

Will pulls him in, digging nails into Hannibal's back, and he's quickly pushed against the lake shore wall. Hannibal thrusts in slow, biting Will's neck as he moves, and smashing his mouth to Will's as he begins to fuck him. He purrs, barely able to swim, but he's held as wave after wave of pleasure rushes to the surface what feels like moments later.

He comes so hard his vision blurs, but Hannibal keeps on, biting around his neck, and his orgasm makes him even more determined to draw out the ecstasy between them. Will can barely breathe but he doesn't want to stop, and Hannibal pushes him up out of the water. He keeps fucking Will until he comes again, tentacles brushing Will's half hard cock, and Will whimpers as they try to draw another orgasm from him.

"I can't, I…"

Hannibal bites down hard and he sobs, pulling him closer until weakly he feels his body shudder as wetness gushes out his backside. Will pants for breath, turning to kiss Hannibal again, and they smile at each other.

"That was…"

A low splash makes them both freeze, and they turn to see a purple fin darting out of the water so fast he's sure it wasn't real. "Did you just see…?"

"Yes," Hannibal growls, pulling out of him, "I'll be back."

Will clutches him hard, "No, no, no, don't...just…"

"Will, that was *not* a fish."

He feels tears fill his eyes. "Hannibal, what if…?"

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Go inside, Mielasis. Please?”

“I’m coming with you.”

“Will, no. If whatever that was ends up being dangerous and I do not return, the children need you.”

He shakes his head. “NO! I’M NOT LOSING YOU!”

Hannibal sighs. “Then we’ll go inside for now.”

“Hannibal…”

He kisses Will softly, hand brushing his cheek. “I don’t want to upset you, Mielasis. If my searching for whatever that was would upset you...then I will remain here.”

Will shakes his head. “We can’t bring the kids here, not if...not if there’s another one.”

Hannibal sighs. “Will…”

“I’m not putting my children in danger again, Hannibal,” he says, standing and marching for the door, “I REFUSE TO PUT MY FAMILY IN DANGER AGAIN!”

Hannibal comes up behind Will and hugs him hard. “Will, deep breaths.”

He takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly, a sob escaping. “I *can’t* ,” he whispers, “I just...I can’t.”

“I know, Will. I know.”

Will breaks away from him and heads inside, wiping tears from his cheeks as he picks up his clothes. He’s sopping wet as he heads for the bathroom and gets a towel that he wraps around himself.

Hannibal does the same, hugging him again, and Will breathes in his scent. “We can kill it,” he whispers, “And get monster married.”

“Will, we have no idea what we just saw.”

“It looked like a fin.”

“Perhaps it was only a fish of some sort, or even…”

Will steps back to stare into his eyes. “You know it wasn’t.”

Hannibal touches his cheek again. “Will, I think making this type of decision now would be foolish.”

He sighs, pulling away from him. “Fine, let’s just get dressed and go home. I need to see them. I...I can’t stay here. Not after that.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Of course.”

They dress in relative silence, tension in the air, and by the time they head for the front door Will’s fear has grown so much he can barely go outside. Hannibal holds his hand as they head for the car, and he’s tense until Hannibal’s in there with him.

The door locks are barely a deterrent to his fear, and he plasters himself against Hannibal when they drive away.

Will says nothing the whole ride home, only takes Hannibal's hand in his, and by the time they pull up to the house it's past lunch but food is the last thing on his mind. He runs for the door, knocking wildly until his father opens to let him inside. "Hey, you're early what's…?"

He runs inside, ripping off his clothes, and jumps into the pool to get to his eggs. Will pulls them in close as the tears start to fall, and he barely hears Hannibal talking to his father at the door.

No one's gonna take you from me. No one.

The eggs roll in the water under him, and he nuzzles every single one with his nose until he feels calm again.

"Will?"

Will looks up at Hannibal teary eyed. "I'm ok."

"You are not ok, Mielasis. Anyone can see that."

He sighs. "Please, get in the water."

"Will…"

"GET IN THE WATER! I NEED YOU IN THE WATER!"

Hannibal strips fast, and Will's father leaves after patting his shoulder. The minute Hannibal comes in the pool Will drops shift, and to his surprise feels something out of his back reach

for Hannibal's touch.

"Will...you…"

He can't stop the tears as he watches his own tentacles grow right before his eyes.

"I...I have them too?"

"Oh, Will….they...they're…"

Will's tentacles touch Hannibal's, and he rushes forward to pull Will into a kiss. He clutches him hard, letting out a sob, and Hannibal bites his neck softly.

"No one is going to harm us, Will," he growls, "I promise you."

"Hannibal…"

" *I promise you* ."

Will can't seem to stop crying, the eggs jumping around in his upset, and he hates how weak he still feels. His teeth feel heavy in his mouth as he buries his face against Hannibal's chest, breathing him in.

No one.

No one.

He barely remembers falling asleep, but when he wakes Hannibal is whispering to the eggs.

“Your daddy is upset now, little ones, but I will protect us. Nothing will happen again as before, I promise that I will keep our family together if it’s the last thing I do.”

Will digs his nails into Hannibal’s back, kissing his chest. “So will I.”

“Will…”

“How long was I out?”

“Several hours,” Hannibal whispers, “I’m sure you’re hungry. Your father came in to check on you and Beverly called twice.”

Will sighs. “I’m not...I don’t want to see anybody.”

He runs his hand down Will’s back and kisses his forehead. “That’s perfectly fine.”

“And I don’t want to go to that house again unless it’s to kill that purple monster.”

“Will...we have no idea what we’re dealing with yet. I think it’s unwise.”

Will lifts his head. “The last time we didn’t *deal* with another something like us it tried to kill me and take our babies. I’m not putting my family in danger again, Hannibal.”

Hannibal frowns. “And if this creature is dangerous? What if it murders us both? Or just one of us?”

Will closes his eyes. “I...I don’t know.”

“Will, I understand your fears. I have them as well. But...the rational thing to do is wait and see if this monster comes to us again. If it does...then we’ll have little choice but to retaliate. It might just have been surprised to see some creatures like itself in the water.”

“Then it’s a perv for watching us fuck.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “You were quite beautiful when you experienced orgasm, so I can’t entirely blame it for admiring the view.”

Will scoffs. “It’s not a joke, Hannibal.”

“I know, Mielasis, I was merely trying to lighten your fears.”

He lays his head down against Hannibal’s chest. “Nothing will lighten my fears until I know that thing is dead.”

Hannibal sighs. “In due time, Will. For now...your father put some food by the edge of the pool for us. Mostly fruits that wouldn’t spoil.”

Will swims out and pulls the plate over the pool edge bringing the fruit back with him. He holds a grape out for Hannibal who eats it with deliberate care. “Good?”

“Yes.”

They feed each other until the plate is empty, and Will settles in Hannibal’s arms again.

“We’re going back.”

“Will…”

He digs his nails into Hannibal’s side, his teeth heavy as he says it again. “We’re going back.”

Hannibal sighs again. “As you wish.”

Will lays there all night long, barely sleeping, and when morning comes he leaves the pool to shower alone. Hannibal doesn’t join him, and right now he wants to be alone.

The purple creature’s fin seems to burn into his mind and he knows if he sees it again he won’t hesitate.

That thing needs to die.

And if Hannibal won’t do it?

He will.

Chapter 70

Will barely sleeps that night, his dreams filled with the purple finned creature, and he finally gets out of the water to walk outside before sunrise in his robe. His toes touch the edge of the lake but he doesn't go any closer and tries to calm down.

Hannibal joins him just as the sun rises, wrapping arms around Will and pulling him from the lake's edge. He kisses Will's cheek. "I wish I could think of something to calm you."

He shakes his head. "You can't."

"Will…"

"Are the eggs…"

"Your father is with them," Hannibal sighs, hugging him tighter, "I wouldn't leave them."

They watch the sunrise and Will tries to be happy about the view, but his mind is still stuck on what they saw yesterday.

"You've never...seen anything that color before?"

Hannibal nuzzles his neck. "My family were all blue, like you and I. Father never said a word to me about creatures of our...type...being different in any way so I thought perhaps...we were the last."

"Until Matt."

"Yes."

“The fin…”

“It was similar,” Hannibal whispers, turning Will’s cheek, “But perhaps this mystery creature is of the sea but not the same as we are.”

Will sighs, shaking his head. “I don’t care what it is, I want it gone.”

“Will, I know you’re worried. But…”

He turns in Hannibal’s arms and reaches up to touch his face. “I can’t trust anyone but my own family,” Will whispers, “You, Dad, Bev...you’re family. This thing...we have no idea what it could do to us.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “I think it’s quite reckless of us both to go hunting it when the children are not yet hatched. If something were to happen…”

“ *Nothing* will happen if we’re together,” Will whispers, “Hannibal...please.”

He sighs, and Will’s fingers brush his cheeks. “We’ll search,” he whispers, “And if something happens...we’ll strike.”

Will throws himself at him and buries his face into Hannibal’s neck. “Thank you.”

Hannibal rubs his back, kissing Will’s neck, and gently nips as Will lifts his head. “Now?”

“Yes, we can go now.”

Will gets up off his lap and runs for the house, bypassing his father. He throws open his drawers, looking for clothes that he won't be wearing long, and comes back to raised voices.

"No! Absolutely not!"

"Michael, this is Will's wish."

"Well you're the goddamn adult! Tell him no!"

Will runs the rest of the way, growling already, and stops just short of the pool. "I'm not a child!"

His father turns angrily. "You're MY child, and you're SIXTEEN! You have six eggs just ready to burst and you're gonna go out hunting some monster in the lake you have no idea about? How stupid can you be?"

"IT COULD HURT US!" Will yells, poking him, "YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT---"

Michael grabs Will's arms hard. "I KNOW WHAT THESE CREATURES ARE CAPABLE OF WILL! I KILLED ONE MYSELF A DECADE AGO! DON'T ACT LIKE I DON'T KNOW!"

Will pushes him back hard, tears in his eyes as his vision reddens. "Then you know why I need to do this," he whispers, his voice almost a hiss, "Why I need to get rid of it."

His father's chest is heaving and Hannibal comes over to Will, putting his hand on Will's back.

"Will is stronger than you know, Michael, and I promise you...if there's a chance that he'll be in danger...I will sacrifice myself in his stead."

Tears fall down Will's face as his anxiety rises, and he sees the eggs all hoping around which only upsets him more. "I'm going," he says, "We'll call you in a couple of hours."

His father shakes his head. "If you don't call me in two hours I'm taking the grand-eggs and driving out there myself."

"You don't know where it is."

"Yes," Hannibal says, "He does. I provided him with the directions yesterday in case of an emergency."

Will sighs, sniffling as he turns to kneel down outside the pool. He touches every egg one at a time and smiles. "I'll be back," he whispers, "Don't worry."

The eggs seem to calm down when he's touched them and Will doesn't look back as he walks outside toward the car. He climbs into the car and buckles up, staring out the windshield. His phone rings and he sighs before putting it to his ear.

"There you are! I was…"

Will sniffles. "Bev," he sighs, "Can I call you back tonight?"

Bev pauses. "Are you ok?"

"Yeah, I'm...I just...got in a fight with Dad."

"Oh."

“I do want to talk to you, I just…”

“No, no,” she says, as Hannibal gets in the car, “It’s ok. I just wanted to talk about my new shrink and stuff. You didn’t call back so…”

“It’s been...sort of a mess. Maybe you can come over later tonight.”

“Yeah,” she says, “Are you sure you’re ok?”

He looks at Hannibal who takes his hand. “Yeah, I’m ok.”

“Ok, Will. Call me later.”

“Ok. Bye.”

Will ends the call and sets the phone in Hannibal’s cup holder just as he pulls away from the house. He doesn’t look back at the house, though his fear seems to rise, and when they’re finally on the road he lets go of Hannibal’s hand.

“Are you certain you wish to do this?”

He nods, leaning back. “Yeah.”

“We can bring weapons and…”

“No,” he growls, “I want to use my hands and...my teeth.”

Hannibal grabs his hand again and kisses it softly. “As you wish.”

The ride feels longer this time, though Will's mind is reeling, and when they pull in it's not even nine. Will doesn't bother going toward the house, taking off everything, and stares out at the water like he's sure the creature will just pop up again.

"We'll get you," he hisses, "We will."

Hannibal pulls him into a side hug, and kisses Will's cheek. "We will."

Will goes in first, dropping shift so fast he practically zooms through the water. Hannibal is there at his side, staying close, and he inhales trying to smell anything different.

I don't sense anything amiss.

Neither do I.

They swim longer, further and further away from the house until he's not even sure where they are. Hannibal pulls him to the surface unexpectedly, and Will fights his embrace growling.

"What? What are…"

"There's nothing here, Mielasis."

"It's here, Hannibal. We know it's here."

"Perhaps this creature is in hiding, and not in the water today. Or they could just have decided we're not worth pursuing."

Will blinks back tears. “It’s here.”

“Will…”

He pushes him away, trying to go under once more but Hannibal pulls him up so fast he bites his arm. “NO!”

“THERE IS NOTHING HERE!”

Will bursts into tears, falling into his chest, and Hannibal licks his cheeks. “No, no, no…”

“I will protect us, Will, I swear it.”

“We have to find it, we…”

A splash makes them both turn, and Will tenses up just as he sees someone peek out of the water. They have long black hair and red eyes that look mid-shift. Will growls, ready to pounce, and Hannibal holds him tight.

“My mate is desperate to kill you,” Hannibal growls, “If I let him go he will attack. Show yourself.”

They move up slowly, and Will sees them shift even before they get half up the water. He can tell even from here that she’s a woman. The purple of her shifted form seems to shimmer in the sun, and unlike when they shift she looks more human than monster. Her entire body is purple, even her face, and she reminds him of a mermaid. Will is temporarily mesmerized until he closes his eyes.

“I mean no harm,” she whispers, “I just...I’ve never…”

Will growls, claws digging into Hannibal’s arm, and he doesn’t let him go.

“What are you?” Will hisses, his vision red when he opens his eyes.

“I...I’m like you.”

“No, you’re not,” Hannibal says, “Clearly, you’re not.”

She shifts back into her human form, and slumps forward against Hannibal’s arm. “All I know is what my mother told me, and...I didn’t know the monster who...hurt her...for long.”

She does not seem to want to harm us.

Neither did he.

Hannibal rubs his back and he shivers, wanting to get closer. “My mate still wants to harm you. Tell him why he shouldn’t.”

Will glares at her as she steps closer. “ *Don’t* .”

“I...I mean you no harm. I’ve been alone for a long time and I just...I was...I’ll leave you alone.”

He can smell her from here, unmated just like he still is, and the very idea of her being near Hannibal makes him want to rip out her throat. “ *He’s mine* ,” he growls, *“Mine.”*

“I can see that,” she says, “I have no designs on your mate, and...I can smell you on him.”

Will shakes his head. “I can’t...you have to go.”

She nods. “I understand.”

“What’s your name?” Hannibal asks, making Will growl louder.

“It doesn’t matter!”

“Chiyoh,” she whispers, “I...I’m sorry to have upset you both like us. I will not bother you again.”

Will looks down and sees the blood dripping from Hannibal’s arm. He starts to lick it up, tears running down his face, and Hannibal rubs the back of his neck.

I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry.

Will...

The sound of Chiyoh going back under the water makes him calm down, and Hannibal pulls him into a tight hug. He wraps both his arms and legs around him, sobbing into his neck.

“Shhh…”

“I’m sorry, sorry, sorr…”

Hannibal swims them back to shore, and Will can’t seem to stop crying even as he brings them to the shower. They wash off and he pulls Will into bed, holding him so close he relaxes all at once.

“I love you, Will. Don’t ever question that.”

“I love you, Hannibal, I...I’m sorry I…”

“Shhh…”

Will falls asleep fast, barely able to keep his eyes open, and when he wakes up Hannibal’s still holding him. He’s got a bandage on his arm, and Will touches it softly.

“I’m sorry.”

“I know, Will. I know.”

“I freaked out, and I just...she’s gone?”

“I believe so, yes, but she’s still close obviously.”

Will closes his eyes. “She was young,” he whispers, “Like me.”

“Yes.”

“She was...pretty.”

“Will…look at me.”

He turns and Hannibal touches his cheek. “I see no one *but* you. Do you understand? There was no one before I caught your scent and there is no one now that I’ve fallen completely and totally in love with you. You are my heart, my soul, and my everything.”

Will nods. “Me too.”

“I know, Mielasis,” he whispers, putting his hand over Will’s cheek, “But as we’ve not yet become…”

“Monster married,” Will finishes, sniffling.

“Yes. Until then your insecurity and fears...I need you to know I understand them but they’re completely unneeded. We have our family, and no one will get in the way of that. Not even another creature like us.”

Will kisses him softly, and Hannibal pulls him close until he’s settled on his shoulder.

“I would’ve hurt her.”

“I know, Will.”

“I...I could still.”

Hannibal rubs his back. “I know, Mielasis, and I would not blame you.”

Will closes his eyes. “I...I just...I want to be mated, I want...I just want things to be ok again.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “They will be, Mielasis, I promise you. They will be.”

“I wanna see the eggs,” Will whispers, “I need to see the eggs.”

He lifts Will’s chin up and smiles at him. “Then we’ll go see them...right now.”

Will gets out of bed, pulling on the clothes Hannibal gives him, and they walk to the car without saying a word. He closes his eyes again as the car starts to move, and the worries of hours ago seem to fade.

Chiyoh is out there, he knows that, and she’s not going to hurt them.

But if she even touches what’s his?

He’ll hurt her.

Anything to protect his famliy.

Chapter 71

Will calls home on the ride home, leaning into Hannibal's side, and his father answers in a gruff voice. "I was just about to leave. What happened?"

"We let her go," Will whispers, taking Hannibal's hand, "She...she said she's not...gonna hurt us."

"It's a girl one?"

"Yeah."

His dad's quiet. "The eggs were all flipping out, ya know? I thought I'd have to stick 'em in a cooler or something to bring 'em out there, but they calmed down after a while."

Will sniffles. "Thank you for looking after them."

"You're welcome, Kid, but...don't do that shit to me again."

"We won't," Will sighs, "I...I'm sorry. I still am kinda on edge I don't…"

"I know, Will, but still... *don't* ."

Will squeezes Hannibal's hand. "I won't."

"You're on the way now?"

"Yeah."

“Good. I’ll be waiting.”

“Ok, Dad. Thank---”

The call ends and Will sighs. “Dad’s mad at me.”

“I assumed that from the anger when we left.”

“Are you?”

Hannibal kisses his hand. “Of course not. I completely understand why you felt so strongly about Chiyoh possibly being a threat. You’ve gone through much trauma in very little time, Mielasis. I would never fault you for wanting to keep our children safe.”

“I hurt your arm.”

“You were afraid, Will, and I understand why. I’ve...had plenty to fear myself.”

Will leans into him again. “With your family.”

“Yes.”

“How did you get through it? After?”

“It took plenty of time, and there are still moments that can trigger memories that hurt me deeply. I’ve been around much longer than you have, of course, so I really can’t tell you how much time it will take.”

He closes his eyes. “But we’ll have a lot of time.”

“Yes, we will.”

Will doesn’t remember falling asleep but wakes up in the water again with the eggs close to his chest. Hannibal isn’t there, but his father is, and he waits to be yelled at again.

“I’m sorry.”

“I know, Son.”

“I can’t trust anyone but my family,” he sniffles, his eyes filling with tears, “And definitely not any kind of...monster...like me.”

“Will, you don’t have to explain.”

“He was gonna take my kids,” Will whispers, “And you know what that’s like.”

His father sighs. “Yeah, I do, but...running into danger like that? That was stupid, and if you and Hannibal had been killed…”

“I know.”

“You have to think about that kind of stuff now.”

“I know, Dad.”

“And Hannibal says she’s not even a threat so…”

“I KNOW” Will yells, making the eggs start to react.

He grabs them close, touching each and every one, and feels tears fall down his face. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I…”

“Will, breathe,” Hannibal says, coming from the kitchen to kneel by the pool.

“Maybe I shouldn’t be here,” his Dad mumbles, “I just keep riling you up.”

“NO!” Will says, grabbing his arm, “Don’t leave! D..on’t. Please stay.”

Michael nods and he lets him go, taking Hannibal’s hand instead. “Breathe, Will.”

He takes a deep breath and looks at his father. “I’m sorry.”

“I know. I...I think I’m gonna take a drive. You need anything?”

Will shakes his head as he watches him go, and Hannibal kisses his hand. “Will.”

“I keep messing up.”

“No, you don’t.”

“Yes, I do,” he says, voice thick with emotion, “I just…”

He stops when he feels the eggs all start to hop around, and watches as they float out toward the middle of the pool. Hannibal starts to take off his clothes as Will stands frozen staring at them. “Will…”

The eggs all suddenly fall down under the water at the same time.

“What are…”

Hannibal gets in the pool just as they resurface, all much bigger than they were just moments ago. They’re now as big as his hand.

“What just happened?”

He takes the eggs into his arms and comes back to Will who touches them with wonder. The once hard shells are now just a bit softer, and he frowns. “Is that normal?”

“No, but...I don’t think our children are advanced.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means,” Hannibal says, putting Will’s hand over the closest egg’s shell, “They’re eager to meet us and are not going to be stronger than most.”

Will smiles. “It’s only been a few days.”

“Yes, but...they’re growing as they need to. I’m not entirely familiar with the growth of eggs, I won’t pretend to be, but...from what I’ve seen in *his* notebooks and what I remember from Mischa? They’re nearing the end of this stage.”

Will sniffles. “I just hope they’re ready by then.”

Hannibal pulls him in close. “They will be.”

He leans into the touch and Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I know you keep saying don’t apologize, but...I just want to say sorry one more time.”

There are scabs where his nails dug in Hannibal’s arm and he touches them softly.

“I know, Will, but...please don’t think you need to say it again.”

“Ok.”

“Would you like me to tell you a story?”

He smiles. “Is it a happy one?”

“Perhaps, though it all depends on how you feel after.”

“That’s not cryptic or anything.”

“Will…”

“Fine.”

Hannibal hugs him, and the eggs all lean against Hannibal’s arm. “There was once an angry monster who held captive anyone who he thought was beautiful in hopes to keep them for himself. The captives would cry and fight this monster, often cursing him to all oblivion and making his life so unbearable he’d kill them.”

“That makes no sense,” Will mumbles, “If he takes them in and forces them to stay why would they be good for him? And why take them only to kill them?”

“He was lonely, I suppose, and didn’t know how to make someone like him for himself.”

Will sighs. “Well it’s pretty stupid.”

“Yes. Can I finish?”

“Is this story about us? Because if you’re about to tell me you secretly kidnapped people…”

Hannibal smiles, kissing his cheek. “No, Will. It’s a fable my mother would tell me when I was a boy.”

“Oh. What happens to the monster?”

“He takes in someone who isn’t afraid of him, and asks him questions that he can’t help but answer. Overtime he falls for this person, who likes him very much as well but the monster realizes he can’t keep him so he lets him go.”

Will frowns. “Does he come back?”

“Yes, but he gets very badly injured so the monster binds them together. He shortens his life span so the man he loves can live longer.”

“But they’re happy?”

“Does it sound like they would be?”

“I think so.”

“The monster and the man, they’re both outcasts from life. The story is about how even those that feel the most unlovable have a place.”

Will looks at him. “Did you feel like that? Unlovable?”

Hannibal frowns. “I was very young when my family was murdered, but...I suppose I did. No one felt as if they were worthy of me, and I couldn’t imagine a complete life with anyone. Then I smelled your scent on Leanne and…”

Will lays his head on Hannibal’s chest. “That’s the only good thing she ever did for me. Keep my scent.”

“Yes.”

He sniffles. “What time is it?”

“Nearly four,” Hannibal says, “Are you hungry?”

“A little. I promised I’d call Bev.”

“I will find you something to eat and hand you the phone.”

“But…”

He kisses Will softly, brushing two fingers against his cheek. “I will return, Will.”

Will sighs as he gets out of the water and Hannibal grabs his cell before he goes to the kitchen again. He calls Bev and leans back against the pool to wait.

“Took you long enough.”

He smiles. *“I was busy.”*

“How are my eggs?”

“Bigger. Hannibal says they’re gonna hatch sooner than they’re supposed to.”

“Is that...good?”

“He thinks so.”

“Oh.”

“I’m sorry if I kinda blew you off this morning.”

“It’s fine, you were upset or something I can’t…”

He sighs. *“You had things to tell me. I should’ve listened.”*

“It was just my stupid therapy session.”

“It’s not stupid, Bev. How did it go?”

“Dr. Bloom is...really nice,” she whispered, *“And I talked ALOT. I cried ALOT. But I think...it’s a good idea. Thank Hannibal for putting me toward her.”*

“I will.”

“I made sure not to say much about you. I did tell her you have a boyfriend and a relationship I’m jealous of. That’s about it.”

He smiles. *“Ok.”*

“That stuff you had this morning...is it over now?”

Will frowns and reaches out as the eggs slowly come back to him. It takes them a bit longer now that they’re so big, but they get close and he touches them. *“No, but...it’s ok. We...ran into a surprise.”*

“A bad one?”

“A little. We found another...creature...like us.”

She’s quiet.

“Bev?”

“Will, that’s not something you just say casually. You...is it a bad one? Are you ok? Do you…”

“She’s not bad,” he mumbles, *“But...I don’t want to be around her. Not right now. I was a little...territorial.”*

Bev lets out a long breath. *“So she’s just swimming around somewhere by herself?”*

“I don’t know, and really I don’t want to know.”

“Will…”

He sighs. *“She’s young, pretty, and...I don’t want her near Hannibal.”*

“You think she could…?”

Will’s lip curls. *“I don’t want to talk about this.”*

“Ok, ok. I’m just gonna say that the next time you run into another creature from the black lagoon let me know, ok? Cuz that’s not just something you blow off.”

“Ok.”

He hears the door open behind him and smiles as Hannibal comes in with what smells like peanut butter. *“I’m gonna let you go.”*

“Ok. Kiss the eggs for me.”

“I will.”

Will ends the call and Hannibal sits on the floor to hold up a bowl. “What are we having?”

“Peanut butter strawberry parfaits.”

He laughs. “Seriously?”

“Yes, I am quite serious.”

Will opens his mouth and Hannibal takes a spoonful putting it past his lips. He moans, licking his lips, and smiles at him. “Perfect.”

“I’m glad you approve,” he whispers, giving him another.

“I called Bev.”

“How is she?”

“She says thanks for Dr. Bloom, and was a little annoyed about me just throwing it at her about Chiyoh.”

“I see.”

He leans forward for another bite, and Hannibal gives him two in a row. “She was ok though, and...the eggs are ok.”

“Yes, they seem calm.”

“Should we change the water tomorrow?”

“I suppose we can, yes.”

Will opens his mouth for more, and Hannibal ends up feeding him the whole bowl before Will does the same to him. “Come in with me, please?”

“You needn’t ask.”

Hannibal comes into the water after, and Will climbs into his lap. He wraps his arms around him and nuzzles his neck. “That was nice, thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“And...I won’t say it again but...I am. You know?”

“I know.”

Will closes his eyes. “If I fall asleep, wake me up if Dad comes home.”

“I will.”

He falls asleep in Hannibal’s arms and wakes up in his bed the next morning. The eggs are in the tub, a little close for comfort, and hears the sound of his father’s annoyed yells at Hannibal.

Will smiles and watches the eggs move.

Good morning

The eggs all stop at the same time and he can almost feel them reply.

You’re getting so big and I’m so proud of you.

They begin to roll toward the edge of the tub, but they’re so cramped they can’t move much.

“Wait, wait,” he says, jumping up out of bed, “Just wait.”

He’s happy when they listen, and touches them one by one.

“Your daddy is changing the water, and your grandpa is trying not to get killed by him. It’s gonna be a good day.”

They don’t move, but he can tell by their calm that everything is gonna be ok.

And for now, that’s enough.

Chapter 72

The next few days are uneventful, though the eggs grow more and more until Hannibal begins to act strange. Will wakes up to find him pacing the room most nights, or sitting in front of the door, and he won't even respond until Will comes over to him.

"Are you ok?" he asks, frowning as they sit close together on the couch.

"Of course I am," Hannibal says, sounding tired, "Why do you ask?"

"You look so tired, and you keep standing in front of the doors like you think something's gonna happen."

Hannibal looks at the door, his arm tightening around Will's back, and sighs. "I'm fine Will."

"Hannibal," Will says, pulling back to look at him, "What's going on?"

He frowns. "I've felt...oddly...on edge the past few days. I'm not sure why."

Will looks at the pool, and then the door. "Is it Chiyoh? Do you think she…"

"No, I...I know it's not because of her."

"Then what?"

"I'm unsure."

"So it *could* be her."

“Will…”

He stands up and starts to pace. “I knew something was wrong, but I…”

Hannibal stops him mid-walk and puts both hands on Will’s face as he stares down at him. “I promise you, Mielasis, it’s not that.”

“Then what is it?”

“I...I don’t know. Have you not felt odd?”

Will looks around the living room, his gaze stopping at the eggs as they roll around the water, and shakes his head. “No.”

“Then perhaps there’s some threat neither of us is aware of,” Hannibal says, caressing Will’s cheeks, “Perhaps…”

A loud pop makes them both look at the water and Will’s knees go out from under him as he feels an odd fear overtake the thoughts in his head. He rushes to the water, not bothering to take off his robe, and sees a small blue hand sticking out of one of the eggs.

He freezes. “Hannibal…”

“This,” Hannibal whispers, “I...must’ve...Will…”

He feels Hannibal’s arms around him as they watch, and the tiny blue arm is joined by another. Will’s eyes fill with tears as the other eggs start to wobble but no others seem to be hatching like the first.

“Why is it just...the one?”

“I’m not sure,” Hannibal whispers, “But it seems one of them is more eager than the others to meet us.”

Will doesn’t move, can hardly breathe, and his chest suddenly aches as a tiny tail pops out of the egg. He sees the other eggs bumping into the hatching one, almost like they’re trying to help, and he can’t stop himself from reaching out to do the same.

“Will, it’s best if…”

“They need me,” Will says, grabbing pieces off in a hurry as suddenly his father comes into the room.

“What’s...oh!”

He rushes toward the pool just as a small head peeks up.

It’s small for a baby, almost too small, but the sudden cry makes Will’s nipples ache.

“Hi baby,” he whispers, laughing pulling it close, “I…”

Hannibal hugs Will tight as he pulls the baby to his chest.

It latches on almost immediately, and shifts to human with a strange precision that Will himself struggled with just weeks ago. “Hello,” Hannibal whispers, touching the curly brown hair on the baby’s head, “It’s...a boy.”

Will laughs, hardly able to see through his tears. “Our tiny baby boy.”

“He’s so tiny,” his father says, “They supposed to be that tiny?”

“No,” Hannibal says, “But,” he touches the baby’s chest, “His heartbeat is strong and he’s breathing just fine. Our kind grow with time out of the egg but usually they’re nearly fully developed when they hatch. This one…”

Will touches the baby’s face, still smiling, “He wanted to be the first, and...I don’t think the others will wait long.”

“You got any names or…?”

He looks at Hannibal who nods. “Dylan,” Will says, “It means son of the sea.”

“Fitting,” his Dad says, reaching out to touch Dylan’s cheek, “Hey there Dylan I’m your Grandpa.”

“Dylan...Michael,” Will whispers, smiling, “His name is Dylan Michael.”

“Oh, that’s...really? You said that was ok?”

Hannibal smiles. “Do you think your son needs permission to name his children after you, Michael?”

“No, I just…shit.”

His father wipes tears from his face. “Dylan Michael. It’s got a good ring to it.”

Will feels the baby suck harder on his chest and he winces.

“Will?”

“Sorry, I just...it came on so suddenly. I didn’t even feel anything happen...up here.”

“It’s natural that the children would drink from you, but…”

“I’m...gonna go sit over there,” Michael says, standing, “I know you’re probably not ready for me to hold him just yet but....he’s beautiful, Son.”

Will smiles. “Thank you, Dad. We’ll...try to whisper.”

“That’s all I ask.”

Hannibal sighs. “This can’t be the first time you’ve had to talk about breastmilk, Michael.”

“I raised my boy on my own, Hannibal, in case you forgot. I didn’t exactly get time to chit chat about that kinda shit.”

Will leans back as he watches the other eggs rush up to circle Dylan’s back. He can almost feel their worry that he’s come too soon, and Will suddenly can’t stop his own.

“You’re sure that...he’s ok? He...he’s so small.”

“We’re not built like humans, Will, and he’s very strong. I promise you.”

He pulls the baby away up on his shoulder when Dylan starts to fuss. The sudden change makes him burp almost immediately without even Will’s help. “I don’t have to tap their backs?”

“I wasn’t much there when Mischa was born, but from what I remember she...was very self-sufficient. I...could consult the…”

“No,” Will whispers, moving to let the baby drink again, “We’ll figure things out on our own.”

Hannibal kisses Will’s cheek and runs his fingers across Dylan’s head. “As you wish, but perhaps...Michael...can you go get some emergency supplies for our new arrival?”

His father jumps up fast and pulls out car keys. “I’m on it! I’ll be back!”

Will smiles as he leaves and Hannibal puts a hand on Dylan’s cheek. “The bond you felt before,” he asks, “Can you feel it now?”

He moves Dylan off his chest and puts a hand on the baby’s back just as a sudden shift makes him harder to hold. “I...yeah, it’s there but…”

Hannibal puts his head on Will’s shoulder. “It’s different.”

“Yeah.”

“He’s safe, Will, and doesn’t need to monitor your emotions to be sure.”

Will feels Dylan burp again and takes him into his arms again. “You want to hold him?”

“Are you ready for me to hold him?”

He nods and turns to hand Dylan to Hannibal who takes the baby carefully into his arms. Dylan blinks up at him with red eyes and Hannibal shifts to show they’re the same. Will lays

his head on Hannibal's shoulder and tears fall down his face. "This is your Daddy," he whispers, "We're both...your daddies."

"Hello, little one," Hannibal whispers, "We're very happy to meet you."

Dylan wiggles in Hannibal's arms and suddenly starts to cry.

"What's…"

Hannibal slowly lowers his hands down to the water and Will wants to stop him at first until the baby starts to swim. He stares wide eyed as his little blue baby swims with ease, his tail almost too long for his small body. Will lets out a sob and shifts himself before going underwater. He watches Dylan swim until the baby comes over to him. Will holds out his arms and Dylan lays against his chest as he sits up again.

"It's...I don't…"

"We're not like them, Will," Hannibal says, "And Dylan is from us both as are the rest of them. Our children...will be extraordinary."

Will comes over to be near Hannibal again and the three of them lay there while the other five eggs wiggle excitedly.

"He's gonna poop on me soon, isn't he?"

"Perhaps."

He laughs. "It's ok if he does," he whispers, "I...I don't want to let him go."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "He's safe, Will," he says softly, "They're safe."

They lay there as Dylan sleeps, humming together, and barely notice when the car pulls up outside. Will's more content than he's been in days when his father comes inside with bags and a giant box.

"I'm here! Any more come?"

"Nope, just one," Will whispers, "What took you so long?"

"It wasn't long at all! I was only gone an hour!"

"Yes," Hannibal says, "But in that hour your grandson swam for the first time."

Michael blinks. "YOU DIDN'T CALL ME! I woulda…"

Dylan suddenly starts to cry, woke up by the yelling, and Will sighs. "Dad, don't yell. He's got a tail. I don't think he's gonna stop at just the one time."

Hannibal smiles, kissing Will's cheek as he whispers, "And you tell me I'm rude to him."

Will blushes. "I wasn't being rude, I was just---"

"That's true, I 'spose. I got the tiniest diapers I could find, and I got…"

He sets down the box.

It's a bassinet.

“I figure it’s probably gonna be temporary but you can’t sleep in water all day.”

Hannibal put a hand on Dylan’s back. “Actually, it’s much better for our kind to be exposed to water as much as possible in our first days. Given Dylan’s size it would be wise to have him in the water full time.”

“But the diaper…”

“I suppose we’ll have to figure it out.”

Will shushes the baby, rocking him back and forth as they talk, and before he can even think there’s a sudden problem.

“Um...we’ll have to figure it out soon because he just...had an accident.”

“See? I told you!”

Will stands up and looks between them. “I’m going to go wash my son in the sink so...you two can figure out how to drain the pool.”

He grabs the diapers and wipes from his father as he goes by and takes Dylan who’s still crying into the kitchen. The water is warming up as he tries to clean him off with wipes, and soon the baby is looking up at him quietly.

“Better, huh?”

Dylan grabs his hand and Will’s chest aches. “Hey there.”

He shifts to human again and Will stares down into his eyes. They're brownish red, just like Hannibal's. "You look just like your daddy," he whispers, "So handsome."

Dylan wiggles as he lifts him up to the water again using the plain water to wash over his skin. He's so small he's just a little bigger than Will's hands, and his eyes fill with tears as Dylan makes fussing noises.

"Shh…"

"I've brought baby soap," Hannibal says from behind him, "If you think it's necessary."

"Yeah," Will whispers, "I...god he's so small."

"He'll grow, Will. I promise."

"You're sure?"

"Yes."

They wash Dylan together in the sink, gently brushing the soapy water over him and rinsing before putting on a diaper. His father is taking buckets outside as he enters the room, and finds a few tiny outfits that look like they'll barely fit the baby in the bag alongside some bottles.

"Do you need help?"

"No, I...I got it."

Dylan isn't too keen on the clothes, shifting a few times, but once he's in them Will carries him to the edge of the pool where the eggs are. "Can you get them?"

"Yes, of course."

The bathroom is the last place Will wants the eggs to be but it's easiest to get fresh water. He stays there holding Dylan when they're inside and feels so tired he can barely keep his eyes open.

"Will? Do you need me to stay?"

"Yeah, but...help Dad."

Hannibal frowns. "I can stay with you, Will, there's no need to…"

He shakes his head. "Please help him."

"Alright, if you insist."

Will holds the baby just above the tub and the eggs all seem eager to be close to him again. "You gotta come out too," he says, smiling, "He's here and...we want to see you all."

The eggs bounce and Will laughs. "But if you want to wait a while...that's ok too."

He doesn't remember falling asleep but when he wakes he's in his bedroom again with Dylan asleep in the newly made bassinet. The eggs are all in the smaller tub now, smushed together, and he watches them swim.

A knock makes him turn just as Hannibal comes inside. "You're awake."

“Sorry I crashed,” he sighs, “I…”

“Don’t apologize. I see he’s gotten a bit bigger.”

Will stands up and walks to the bassinet. Dylan is bigger, only slightly, and he sighs with relief.

“Good cuz I was worried as hell.”

Hannibal hugs him. “He’s strong, Will,” he whispers, “They...are strong. Just like their father.”

Will smiles and turns in his arms. “Which one?”

“Both.”

He kisses Hannibal softly. “I love you.”

“I love you.”

They look down at the bassinet again and Dylan shifts a few times before settling. “He’s gonna be a master at that in a few days. It took me longer.”

“You had no idea who you were,” Hannibal whispers, “We won’t do that to them.”

“No,” Will sighs. “We won’t.”

Chapter 73

The very first thing Bev does when she comes into the house the day after Dylan hatches is scream. Will told her he was out but still her excitement makes the eggs all crowd around Will and the baby in the pool when she runs into the house.

“Oh my god! Oh my god! Will, you have a kid!”

He smiles. “I told you!”

Dylan starts to cry and Will tries to rock him, but he still whines. “Oh shit, sorry is that because of me?”

“A little,” Will says, frowning, “He’s still really small, and I think he’s just not used to all the noise.”

Hannibal sits on the couch and watches them silently, which is strange for him but Will doesn’t say anything.

“Shit, sorry.”

“No, it’s fine. I called you, remember?”

Bev nods, and looks behind her. “Hey, Hannibal.”

He nods to her, and Will frowns. “You can come over, if you want.”

No, I’d rather stay here.

Will holds the baby closer, but Dylan still cries. “I’m not sure…”

He wants the water, Mielasis.

He looks at Hannibal before lowering Dylan into the water. Dylan is instantly quiet, and rolls onto his belly shifting before taking off with the eggs.

“Holy shit! He’s…”

“I’ll never get used to that,” he says, not looking away from him.

“I wouldn’t either, but...like...I still can’t believe you have a kid.”

Will smiles. “You said that already.”

She shakes her head as Will brings Dylan to his chest, and reaches into the pool with tears in her eyes. “I know, but like Will...you have a *kid* . A kid who can swim better than I can!”

Will laughs. “I know, it’s...really strange and really…” he moves closer to Dylan and the eggs, which seem slightly bigger now, “Great.

Bev sighs. “I’m so happy for you, honestly.”

“I’d let you hold him but…”

“No, it’s fine, he’s in his element. One day old and he’s...I still can’t believe you have a tadpoles to like...hold. Everything happened so fast.”

He looks over at Hannibal whose eyes seem slightly red. “It doesn’t feel that way.”

“I guess, I mean...maybe I’m saying it wrong. I just mean it seems like only yesterday you were walking in the woods by my house and now you’re...a dad.”

Will lays on his belly and Dylan moves closer to him. His little claws don’t do much but they reach for Will’s shoulder, and he sits up to take Dylan into his arms. “Yeah.”

Hannibal gets up off the couch and walks out the front door without saying a word.

Bev watches him go and Will’s chest hurts. “Is everything ok?”

“He’s acting weird,” Will mumbles, bringing Dylan to his breast, “He did last night before Dylan came out so maybe another baby is coming?”

“Maybe,” Bev mumbles, “Or maybe it’s just me. I can go, if you want.”

“No, no, it’s fine. He’s just being weird.”

Will can’t help but look out at the open door but he can’t see Hannibal anywhere.

Are you ok?

I’m fine, Will. Just fine.

He sighs and the eggs all come close. They bounce a little to touch Dylan, he thinks, and smiles.

“I’m glad Dad got the swimming diapers because I think that’s all my kids will ever wear.”

“Now I’m picturing you leading all six of your tadpoles in a family swim with their little blue diapers floating on the water.”

They both laugh.

“That will probably happen eventually.”

“Call me so I can take pictures.”

He laughs. “I will.”

Bev frowns. “So...um...I did come over to see your adorable baby, but...I...I think I might’ve met someone?”

Will blinks. “What?”

She blushes. “I mean we only started talking online, but...she’s really nice and she doesn’t live far away. I’m not seeing her yet, I’m not being dumb I promise. We started playing this online game I love, it’s with wizards and shit it’s dumb but...her character is beautiful and she’s just nice.”

“Oh, that’s...I mean...that’s good, right?”

Bev smiles. “I think so, I mean we haven’t exchanged names other than our screen names but it’s only been like a few days and I didn’t want to tell you with everything going on.”

“Did you tell Dr. Bloom about this?”

“Will…”

Dylan fusses and he moves him to his shoulder. “I mean, you just started therapy.”

Bev stands up. “I knew I shouldn’t have told you.”

“No, Bev, c’mon!”

“I’m happy, Will. Okay? I’m not gonna go run off with Mameido, we’re just friends right now but she’s really nice and I wanted to tell you because you’re my best friend and…” she sniffles, wiping sudden tears from her face, “I just wanted you to be happy that I’m happy.”

Will sighs. “I am, Bev, I just...I don’t want you to get hurt again.”

Bev comes up to the pool and puts her hand on Will’s shoulder. “I won’t,” she whispers, “I promise. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“I’m gonna go now to get a thousand little boy outfits with squids and sharks on them at Walmart.”

Will laughs. “Hannibal won’t like that.”

She turns back to wink at him from the door. “Why do you think I’m doing it?”

“Bye Bev.”

“Bye Will.”

He watches her go outside and walk up to Hannibal, who seems just as stoic as before but he does shake Bev’s hand. Will brings Dylan up to his other breast just as the thumps of his father’s footsteps come down the hall.

“She gone?”

“Yeah.”

“What’s he doin’ out there?”

“I don’t know, he’s been acting weird.”

Michael walks up to the screen door and looks outside. “Nothing good can come out of him being weird.”

“He was weird just before Dylan hatched, so...it might be that.”

He looks back at Will. “You’re not feeling weird?”

“No,” Will says, “But...I don’t like him being this way.”

“Then I’ll go tell him to get his monster ass back in here.”

“Dad…”

His father goes outside and Will sighs as he stares down at his children. “Do you all know what’s wrong with Daddy?”

The eggs are still, which is strange for them, and Will puts his hand out to touch but they move away. He frowns. “Hey! That’s not…”

“Will, what’s wrong?” Hannibal says as he comes through the door in a rush, staring into the pool.

“Nothing, they’re just being weird.”

Hannibal instantly starts to undress, making his father groan, and the sound of him stomping back down the hall almost makes Will laugh. “Hannibal, I’m sure…

He goes right for the eggs, who oddly enough come right to him, and they all go under the water. Dylan fusses and Will brings him up on his shoulder but he still starts to cry.

“Hey, buddy you have to let it out now.”

Dylan wiggles, shifting and unshifting repeatedly until Will lets him go.

He swims off toward Hannibal and the eggs, and seems upset when his diaper stops him from going under with them. “Hey, buddy let’s…”

Hannibal resurfaces to grab him, and Will pulls Dylan back. “No! What’s going on?”

He blinks a Will as water drips down his face. “What do you mean?”

“You’re acting weird, ok!? And...you’re leaving me out of whatever monster bonding dad time you’re having right now and…”

Will blinks back tears as Hannibal touches his cheek. “I apologize, Mielasis, I...my instincts are guiding me and I didn’t realize we’d upset you.”

He sniffles holding Dylan close as he cries. “I’m part of this too,” he says, “Okay? I...I want to be part of whatever you’re doing.”

Hannibal smiles. “The water helps them grow faster, and I felt the need to give that to them. Growth. It was not a slight toward you, Will. I promise.”

“Can I…?”

“Of course, though...I had thought perhaps...the lake might be a better place for this.”

Will blinks. “No,” he says, shaking his head, “Hannibal…”

“We’d bring them along with us, Will,” he says, putting both hands on Will’s face, “And bring them to our cave.”

“But...what if…”

“Nothing will happen, Will, I promise.”

Will watches the eggs all pop up one by one and tears drip down his face. “Not yet,” he says, shaking his head, “I’m not ready.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “As you wish.”

“But for now, we can do underwater laying here?”

He nods. “Of course.”

Will lets Dylan go and the sudden drop of him going under makes his chest ache but he follows moving over to hold him while the eggs all do the same. Hannibal pulls Will in close, and he they all lay under the water for what feels like forever.

How do you feel?

Happy.

Hannibal kisses his cheek.

Good.

This weird bonding moment ends when Will can see Dylan struggle, and he sits up to take him out of the water completely. His diaper is full, which he should’ve known, and he starts to change it as the rest of his family resurfaces.

“Will?”

“Somebody had a dirty diaper,” he says, lifting Dylan up and smiling, “Didn’t he?”

Dylan doesn’t really react, which is oddly comforting for now, and Will brings him close again before he turns again. “Why were you so weird with Bev?”

Hannibal frowns. “I’m unsure what you mean.”

“You kept staring all weird and you just...were weird.”

“I didn’t want to disturb you.”

“Bullshit,” Will says, “Hannibal…”

Hannibal takes the eggs into his arms. “I’m uncomfortable with her here at the moment, now that one of our eggs is hatched and the others are on the way.”

“You’re fine with Dad.”

“Michael is your father,” he says, “Beverly is not.”

“She’s my best friend.”

“Will, I like Beverly very much, but for now that is just how I feel. I’m sure it will lessen the more she’s around the children.”

Will frowns. “Do you want me to keep her away?”

“I wouldn’t ask that of you.”

“So you’re just gonna be weird until the eggs hatch, and maybe even after?”

Hannibal sighs. “You asked me, Will,” he says, “Did you want me to lie?”

“No, but…”

“You trust her,” Hannibal whispers, touching the eggs, “So I will have to be ok with that.”

Will grabs one of the new baby outfits from the bag by the couch and starts to put it on Dylan.

“Okay.”

“Please don’t be upset with me.”

He shakes his head. “I’m not.”

“Yes, you are.”

“I feel like I’m being a hypocrite,” he whispers, rocking Dylan, “Because I said I didn’t want Chiyoh around for the same reasons and…”

“Chiyoh is different, Will.”

His eyes fill with tears. “I don’t like the idea of you and her being...friendly.”

“I know, Will.”

Will closes his eyes. “And you don’t like Bev and me…”

He can hear Hannibal get out of the water and comes over to pull him into a side hug.

“You see Chiyoh as a dangerous threat to our impending union,” he whispers, kissing Will’s forehead, “And I see Bev is an outsider, not a threat. That’s very different.”

He sniffles and opens his eyes to see Dylan is sound asleep. “I love you,” he says, “I love you and I love her but you’re my...everything. My home.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I know, Mielasis, I know. I love you very much as well.”

“I won’t ask her over for a while,” he whispers, “Okay?”

“Will…”

“Okay?”

“Okay.”

Will gets up from the couch to lay Dylan into the bassinet before he rejoins Hannibal on the couch.

“If you’re feeling weird,” he whispers, climbing into his lap, “Tell me, ok?”

“I will.”

They lay on the couch, watching the eggs, and Will’s eyes start to feel heavy.

“Are you hungry?”

“A little.”

“I’ll get dinner started.”

“Wait, just...sit here for a little while. Please?”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Of course.”

He leans back into Hannibal’s arms and frowns. “We need to get monster married soon,” he whispers, taking Hannibal’s hand, “Cuz I don’t like not knowing what that feels like.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “We need to find someone to be the...guest...of honor.”

Will smiles. “We can go hunting,” he sighs, “And find someone.”

“We could.”

“Or maybe they’ll just fall into our laps.”

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek and they kiss softly. “A perfect victim?”

“Yeah.”

“I suppose we’ll have to wait and see.”

Will frowns. “I’m done waiting.”

“Will…”

“Hannibal, we…”

A loud splash makes them both rush toward the pool only to see one of the eggs is tipped over while the others are around it oddly. “What’s…?”

Hannibal holds Will back. “Wait.”

He sees the egg moving, and then to his surprise it gets right back upright again.

“That was weird.”

Hannibal nods. “I think perhaps we need to sleep in the pool tonight.”

“Yeah.”

“Dylan can…”

Will shakes his head. “I’m not...I can’t sleep with him there and I know he’ll be fine but...I can’t.”

“Of course.”

They both get into the water and the eggs stay far away, which is both strange and a good sign.

“You think they’re…?”

“It’s very soon, but...perhaps?”

Will lays against him, eyes feeling heavy as he watches. “If I fall asleep...don’t let me miss, ok?”

“I won’t.”

He sighs.

“We’re ready when you are, kids.”

Chapter 74

Dylan's cry is what wakes Will up in the early hours of the next morning, moonlight barely creeping across the room, and as he picks up his son he hears a crack. He rushes to turn on the lights and Hannibal's instantly awake.

"Will, what's…"

"LOOK!"

The eggs have gotten bigger since last night, and two of them are bumping against one another. Will jumps into the pool just as he hears his father yell down the hall.

"DID I MISS THEM? IS IT HAPPENING?"

"We think so!" Will calls out, making Dylan whimper as he lets him under just a little.

Hannibal's arm comes around them both just as the first egg cracks, and a little arm pops out. Will laughs, shaking, and another arm comes from the second egg. "Hannibal…"

He kisses Will's cheek. "Here they come," he whispers.

The first egg falls over into the water, and struggles to get out which makes Will anxious but he waits.

You can do this .

It breaks open all at once and he hands Dylan to Hannibal to take his new child into his arms.

This one isn't blue, not yet, and its eyes are blue like his own but the hair is all Hannibal.

"It's a girl," he whispers, laughing as he cries, "It's…"

"Emma," Hannibal whispers, "This is Emma."

Will smiles and brings her to his chest. "Hello beautiful," he whispers, "Sweet Emma."

She cries, grabbing for him, and he lets her nurse just as the next baby frees itself.

This one is blue at first, and swims instantly the minute it's free but comes right to them. He's a boy, obviously, and wants to be near his sister. "Ethan," he whispers, "Emma and Ethan."

They look nearly identical, much to his surprise, and both babies grab for his attention. "Shit, I...I have no idea what…"

His father sniffles behind him. "Oh lord," he cries, "It's...look at my grandkids. They're so beautiful."

Hannibal touches each baby's head. "They are."

"Twins," Will whispers, tears running down his cheeks as he smiles.

Hannibal touches his cheek. "Yes, we do."

“I love you,” Will whispers, “I…”

They kiss softly, deeply, and Will finds himself growing warm but pulls away when Emma bites his nipple hard. “Ouch! I think these two have teeth.”

“Perhaps they’re just sucking too hard,” Hannibal says, frowning.

“No, I think…”

Dylan starts to cry, reaching for Will, and he looks down at his chest. “I don’t...how can I feed him?”

“He’ll have to wait his turn.”

“Yeah, I’m sure that’ll work out real well.”

Hannibal gets out of the water with Dylan, who keeps reaching for Will. “I’ll calm him down, Will, don’t worry.”

“But…”

He touches his cheek. “Don’t worry. Michael, can you help me a moment?”

“Yeah, sure.”

Will stares down at his two babies, and then looks at the other three eggs who’ve come to linger close to him. He touches them softly. “Take your time, ok?” he asks, “I’m not sure I can…”

He winces as his chest hurts, and leans back to let the babies nurse better.

When this all started he hadn't thought things through. Six babies would need some way to eat, right? How was he gonna feed them all by himself?

Emma and Ethan wiggled in his arms, and tears started to fall down his face.

Were his babies going to get sick if he couldn't feed them?

How was he gonna feed them?

Will's lip starts to quiver as his worries intensify, and by the time Hannibal comes back he's full on sobbing.

"Will? Will, what's wrong?"

His chest hurts as Hannibal jumps into the water, dropping his shift in worry, and Will does the same not able to stay shifted. He can't speak, shaking so badly, and when he hears Dylan start to cry again he loses it.

"I can't...I...oh god...I...Hannibal…"

Emma wiggles away from Will and he shakes his head, trying to get her but she goes under water.

"Let me," Hannibal says, "Just...calm down, Mielasis. Everything is going to be all…"

Will winces when he feels Emma grab hold of his skin underwater, and he looks down.

To see she's suckling.

He blinks. "H...Hannibal?"

"Stand up for me, Will."

"I…"

He stands on shaky legs, and screams out loud when he looks down at himself. His body seems to have decided to accommodate his worries, and he's grown more nipples in his shifted form. Will lets out a sobbing laugh as Hannibal holds Emma to keep her from falling and Will takes Dylan to his chest. "I suppose...I should've expected this."

"What's wrong? What's...oh shit. What the...Will?"

"Dad, I...I don't want you to…"

His father comes over slowly, not looking away, and shrugs. "Kid, I've seen you and your old man half naked as fish makin' out. You naked and...covered in...um...nipples...is different, yeah, but...your kids have to eat."

Will laughs, tears still falling as Hannibal takes Emma from his lower half so he can walk to the couch. He lays down and Hannibal puts her back again. He kneels down on the floor and touches Will's cheek.

"Are you alright?"

“I...I’m not sure.”

“You were worried.”

He nods.

“Apparently your body fixed that worry for you.”

Will laughs again. “Are...I mean...you’re ok with this?”

Hannibal leans in to whisper to him softly. “More than ok, Mielasis,” he whispers, “Just think of the possibilities.”

Will blushes as his father groans. “And now I’m at my limit. Yell out if more kids come!”

He giggles as Hannibal kisses his cheek.

“I love you.”

“And I you.”

They sit there until the babies are diapered, fed and burped, which is a lot harder to do now with three rather than one. “We should’ve gotten more cribs, or...I dunno....do we have any boxes?”

Hannibal kisses his cheek and stands. “I can go get us supplies.”

“But…”

“I won’t be long, Mielasis, I promise.”

“Most stores aren’t even open this early.”

“I’ll find one.”

Will sighs as he watches him leave the living room to dress, and holds the babies up against his chest. They seem to like being close together again, and he hums softly touching their soft hair as Emma and Ethan shift for the first time.

“Good job,” he whispers, “But we’re gonna sleep out here a little, ok?”

They both whine and he sighs, moving to sit up, and they go back into the water again just as Hannibal comes out fully dressed. He smiles down at Will. “I thought you said water sleeping was a no.”

“They like it.”

“I know, Mielasis, but…”

He sighs. “I’m tired, Hannibal, and...if it makes them happy…”

Hannibal leans down to kiss his forehead. “Goodnight, Will. I will return soon.”

Will drifts, holding the babies to him, and they don’t wake up again until the sun is coming through the windows. He sits up, and they all whine just as the last remaining eggs come up to greet them.

“Hey babies,” he whispers, “You can take your time, ok?”

The eggs all bounce happily, though now that they’re bigger the water splashes a little. Emma, Ethan, and Dylan all wiggle to get out of Will’s arms so he lets them play in the water. It’ll never get any easier letting them go so soon like this.

It’s so weird but feels normal at the same time.

“Better swimmers than I am,” he mumbles, smiling tiredly.

Hannibal still isn’t home, which makes him frown, but he doesn’t move.

“Good morning,” he hears his Dad say, “Little swimmers are all over the place, huh?”

“Yeah.”

He hands Will a piece of toast and he moans taking a bite. “God, I’m starving.”

“You can leave ‘em with me if you need to, Kid.”

Will frowns as he chews. “I know, but…”

His father sighs as he sits down on the carpet. “I know, Will, I know. Where’s Hannibal?”

“He went to get more swimmer diapers and I think some cribs?”

His father laughs. “All by himself?”

“He’s stronger than he looks.”

“Hmph,” his father mutters, “I’m sure he is but...has he ever even been around all that shit? It’s rough to even get stuff for one, let alone six.”

“He’ll be fine.”

“We’ll see.”

Will finishes his breakfast just as his cell phone rings and the babies start to cry at the same time.

“I’ll get it.”

“I can…”

“Take care of my grandkids, son,” Michael says, standing up, “I’ll see how it is.”

Will sighs as he picks up all three babies and checks their diapers. Two need new ones, and the third just seems hungry. “You’ll have to wait, Dylan.”

Dylan whines,reaching for Will, and his father goes to take him so Will can deal with the other two when suddenly something pulls Will close. He looks down and sees a tiny tentacle coming from Dylan’s back.

“Oh shit, he...how are they growing so fast?”

His father stares wide eyed holding the phone. “Um…he’ll have to call you back. We have three babies now.”

Will takes Dylan into his one arm while he tries to change the other two’s diapers which soon Michael starts helping with. They just get them settled with Will laying down again as Hannibal comes in through the door.

“I’ve returned,” he says, sounding exhausted as he carries in five bags on each arm, “I...what is it?”

The phone rings again and he sighs. “It’s Bev, just ignore it. I’ll call her back.”

“Will, what’s wrong?”

Tears start to fill his eyes. “Dylan has tentacles,” he says, his voice shaking, “And I can’t...I don’t know how I can do this.”

“Will…”

“I can barely take care of three, and now...there’s gonna be three more and…”

Hannibal drops the bags and comes to his side, nuzzling Will’s cheek. “I’m here, Mielasis, as is your Father.”

“I might not be a sea monster, but...I can change diapers,” his father mumbles, “And...I raised one, so…”

“See?”

“But we’re moving,” he whispers, “And…”

“We can stay as long as you need to,” Hannibal says, “And...if that means forever...we can do that as well.”

Will sniffles. “I don’t...I want them away from her.”

Hannibal presses his lips to Will’s neck and breathes in. “She’s gone, Will.”

“I know, but…”

He lifts his head. “We’re here now, Will, not her, and look at our family thriving. You’re doing this, despite everything she’s done and everything you’ve been through. You are doing this, and you are a wonderful parent. The children adore you and are so happy to be here.”

Will smiles as tears run down his cheeks. “Dylan used his tentacles on me,” he says, laughing, “He didn’t want to be with Dad.”

“Rub it in,” Michael says.

Hannibal smiles. “See? They love you, and your Father loves you, and I...I adore you. We’ll learn how to get through this, and raise them well….together. All of us.”

Will smiles and kisses him softly.

“Yeah.”

He touches Will’s cheek. “Feel better?”

He nods.

“I will go make you a nice, full breakfast, and when the children are ready to be fed...we’ll discuss ways to make things easier on you. Yes?”

“Yeah.”

“Good.”

Will sighs as Hannibal leaves him again, and his Father starts to empty the bags. Soon the room is filled with unmade cribs, bassinets, diapers, clothes, and toys. He feels a bit sleepy as he watches, and drifts a few times but when he wakes up again his Dad is in the middle of putting together a third bassinet. Dylan is on Will’s chest, fast asleep, and he just knows the other two are in the two bassinets.

“Hey,” he whispers tiredly.

“Sleep good?”

“Better.”

“Your friend came by,” his Father says, “We told her to wait a few hours. She wasn’t too thrilled.”

Will frowns. “You should’ve woken me up.”

“That was Hannibal’s call, Kid, not mine,” His Dad says, “Speaking of…”

He can smell the food as Hannibal comes over, and sits up to smile at him.

“Hi.”

“You slept for a long while. The food got cold, but it’s been warming in the oven. Are you hungry?”

“Very.”

Hannibal holds out a covered plate, and begins to feed him with his hands. He feels warm with each bite, and Hannibal’s eyes turn red as he licks his fingers.

“That’s my cue to go, have fun.”

Will giggles. “Dad, you can come back!”

“No, he can’t,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, “Eat.”

He smiles.

“You just want to play with my new nipples.”

“Very much so, yes.”

Will blushes. “I’m holding a baby.”

“I can put him in the bassinet, if you’d like.”

He licks Hannibal's fingers one more time as he eats a piece of french toast.

"After breakfast."

Hannibal kisses him softly. "I can hardly wait."

Chapter 75

Will tries unsuccessfully to not think about the idea of Hannibal touching his new nipples throughout breakfast, and even after Dylan is in the bassinet he can feel his backside dampening the couch. Hannibal says nothing and feeds him by hand until all the food is gone, though the look in his eyes shows he knows just what's going through Will's head.

"Our children are like a foot away," he whispers, licking his lips for what feels like the tenth time.

"And?"

"It's...weird."

Hannibal kisses him softly, fingers brushing his cheek. "Would you like to leave them with your father and go elsewhere?"

"We might miss the other babies," he whispers, "I don't…"

He kisses him again. "Can you be quiet, Mielasis?"

Will shivers as he feels Hannibal brush one of his new nipples with his fingers. "I...I don't know."

"Would you like me to stop?"

He shakes his head.

Hannibal squeezes two of his lower, and Will hisses, arching up as Hannibal brushes a kiss to his neck. “They’re still sensitive even after hours of use,” he whispers.

“They’re new,” Will hisses, his vision reddening, “And...we’ve never…”

He brushes his tongue across one of them, and Will bites his lip to keep from crying out.

“The taste,” he whispers, “Is exquisite.”

“Hannibal…”

“Mielasis, look at me,” Hannibal says, making Will shiver as he turns.

“What?”

“Now or later?” he asks, his eyes completely red.

Will drops shift, shaking, and feels his tentacles brush Hannibal’s hand. “Now.”

Hannibal shifts mid jump before he hands on Will, holding down his arms with his tentacles, and he begins to suckle at every teat Will has. Will fights his grip, his whimper almost too loud, and knows just how close he is.

“Please,” he gasps, “Please, Hannibal...pl....”

He drops Will’s hands, flipping him onto his stomach, and before Will can even beg again he’s inside him. Will buries his face into the cushions, arching up to meet his thrusts, and he comes so fast he’s dizzy. Hannibal’s hard frenetic thrusts don’t stop, and he doesn’t want

them to, but it takes very little for him to spill inside Will right after. He bites onto Will's neck, digging his claws into Will's sides, and they both fight to catch their breath.

"I love you," he purrs, licking Will's wound.

"Mmm...me too," Will says, tired suddenly again, "I...I didn't...thank you."

"For?"

"Finding another upside to my new nipples."

Hannibal smiles, still not pulling out, and he nuzzles Will's cheek. "I think finding the upside was thanks enough."

Will laughs.

They both turn as the remaining eggs splash water out loudly, and they can see they're all lined up at the pool's edge.

"They can still feel me," Will says, blushing, "That's one thing I won't miss."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "At least it was a good feeling."

Will groans. "Just stop."

He pulls them apart, turning Will to kiss him softly, and stands. "I will get something to clean us."

Will rolls onto his side and watches the eggs calm down. He's glad they have each other, even if they're still hidden away. A sudden thought hits him and it's almost too painful to fully think about but he can't help himself.

Was he like this with his brothers and sisters?

He imagines Leanne didn't give them anywhere to grow, or even much time to be, and Will's eyes fill with tears as he imagines the pain of losing them one by one.

"Fuck," he whispers, tears filling his eyes, "Fuck her."

"Will?"

He wipes his eyes as Hannibal returns. "I'm ok."

"You're crying."

"I…"

"Look at me, Will."

He rolls onto his back and stares up at him. "I was just...thinking about my brothers and sisters and...how they weren't...they didn't get a chance to be eggs or even…"

Hannibal takes a warm washcloth and rubs it over Will's belly. "Leanne didn't want to be a mother," he whispers, "I know that from just listening to her. I believe that even if she gave birth to you in a normal way...she would've left you. I know that's not helpful to hear, and the thought of the other siblings you may have had is...hard. But she was a monster, and if their deaths brought you into life, I'm thankful for that."

Will sniffles. “They deserved more.”

“I believe she would not have cherished them, or even barely ate enough to help them fully form. It’s a true miracle that you yourself were even as healthy as you were.”

He rolls onto his side as Hannibal cleans his back. “You think so?”

“Yes,” he whispers, kissing Will’s neck, “You cherished our children, even when...you were angry with me. Leanne did nothing of the sort.”

Will rolls onto his back again and watches Hannibal clean himself. “That’s true.”

“She was a jealous, vengeful, horrible person, and the world is better for having lost her.”

He sits up and puts his arms around Hannibal’s neck from behind. “Yeah.”

“And we’re better for having lost her.”

Will nibbles on his neck. “I love you so much.”

“I love you too, Will, very very much.”

He turns and kisses Will again, so soft that it’s feather light.

“You know,” Will says, laying his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, “You said something about wanting to go for a swim earlier.”

“I did no such thing.”

He laughs. “Ok, maybe not completely but...wanna swim now with them?”

“Of course.”

They get up from the couch and enter the pool together as the eggs move off to the side. Will lays down on his back and floats, staring up at the light above them while Hannibal pulls him close.

“Better?”

“Yeah.”

“The eggs are being oddly standoffish.”

Will looks over and sees they’re still away. “That’s weird.”

“Perhaps...they wish to give us space.”

“They never did before.”

“Perhaps this is a precursor to their hatching.”

“Hmm.”

He floats closer to Will, wrapping his arms around him from underneath, and Will laughs as nibbles on his neck again. “I think the bite is permanent now, you can stop.”

“Never,” he hisses, “Not until…”

“Our monster wedding,” Will says with a sigh, “We need to get on that.”

“Perhaps...we can go hunting soon.”

“After.”

“Yes.”

Will closes his eyes, lost in the feeling of their closeness and the water. He’s almost sleepy when a sudden cry makes him wide awake again. “Duty calls.”

“Stay,” Hannibal says, “I will look to them.”

“Ok,” he sighs.

He doesn’t move, just floats, and is about to turn when something pokes his foot. Will looks down, and to his surprise he sees one of the eggs. And there is a foot hanging out of it. Will shouts.

“Hannibal!”

“Will?”

“The egg! It’s…”

Hannibal rushes to the pool holding all three babies, who are still fussing as they watch the lone egg begin to hatch. Will’s chest aches as he moves closer, and the little foot tries like hell to swim to him.

“Hey, hey,” he says, pulling it closer, “You’re doing great, buddy just…”

Another foot comes out, human still, and then suddenly there’s a baby in Will’s hands. This one has no curls, but dark hair like his own, and he smiles as he holds it close.

“It’s a boy,” he whispers, “Liam.”

Hannibal reaches over and touches the baby’s head, smiling, “Hello Liam.”

The baby latches on fast to Will’s chest, and he sits up walking to the couch as Hannibal carries the others over. He’s got tears running down his face as Hannibal places the others on him, and they hold hands as the babies take milk.

“Four down,” Will says, his voice shaking, “Two to go.”

“Will…”

He touches little Liam’s hair, and he’s so much bigger than the others were when they hatched that Will is grateful. “He’s big.”

“Yes, I see that.”

“That’s good, right?”

“Very.”

Will lies there for what feels like forever until Hannibal comes with what smells like steak.

“Lunch?”

“I thought it was time to eat, yes, let me hold two of the children.”

They switch the kids over and help them burp though it seems much easier for them. Will moves Dylan up to his left side and Liam to his right while the twins go lower just as Michael returns.

“Wait,” he says, eyeing him, “Did you not call me for one of them????”

“Dad…”

“I was right down there!” he yells, making the kids all start to cry, “I…”

“Calm yourself, Micheal,” Hannibal sighs, “It was very fast and I nearly missed Liam myself.”

He frowns. “Oh.”

“We didn’t do it on purpose.”

“I just…”

Will smiles as Hannibal feeds him some meat. “It’s ok, Dad.”

“You need me to put any to bed while you...do whatever you’re doing?”

Will blushes. “I’m eating.”

“He’s feeding you,” he says, blushing, “Is it a sea monster mating food thing?”

He covers his face with one hand. “Dad…”

“I don’t know! I’m trying to be supportive!”

“Will has no free hands,” Hannibal says, rubbing Dylan’s back, “I was merely helping.”

“Oh.”

“I have cooked three steaks for lunch,” he says, “And left you one in the oven, if you’re so inclined.”

“Um...thanks?”

“You’re welcome.”

Michael takes off toward the kitchen and Will grins. “I think he likes you.”

“He does not,” Hannibal whispers, “But he’s tolerating, and I appreciate it.”

Will smiles. “So do I.”

They finish feeding the children and change their diapers before bringing them to the pool once again. Hannibal gets in first and Will next while they let the babies in one by one. Will resists the urge to stop Liam from swimming, smiling as he shifts for the first time, and the babies all seem happy to be together. He leans on Hannibal’s chest as tears fill his eyes.

“You may not have had this yourself,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, “But...you get to see them have it.”

“Yeah.”

He leans back against Hannibal just as his phone rings. “Shit.”

“Let it ring.”

“It might be Bev, she…”

“Will, she knows you have your hands full.”

“I know, but…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek again. “Let it ring.”

“I’ll get it!”

Michael comes running in and Hannibal’s grip tightens on Will. “Let it ring!”

He stops with his hand on the phone. “What?”

“Will needs this time,” Hannibal growls, “And Beverly...she needs to stop interfering.”

“Hannibal, she’s just…”

His Dad answers the phone and walks over to Will handing it to him. “You wanna talk to her?”

Will frowns. “I…”

Hannibal sighs. “Do what you wish, Will, I was just…”

He takes the phone and puts it to his ear. **“Bev?”**

“THREE BABIES? I MISSED ONE? Why won’t Hannibal let me come over! I…”

“Four,” Will says, leaning back against him, **“We have four.”**

She’s quiet. *“Do you not WANT me to come over?”*

He sighs. **“It’s not that.”**

“Then what, Will?”

“It’s all happening really fast and I just...want some time that’s all.”

“Fine.”

“Bev…”

“All you had to do was tell me I was bothering you, and I would’ve backed off. Hanging up on me and locking the door when I come over is just shitty. You...just...fine. Call me when Sugar Monster says I can come into the house again.”

“Bev, that’s not…”

He hears her hang up and ends the call handing the phone back to his Dad. “Thanks.”

“Will?”

“She’s mad.”

“Yes, I heard.”

He closes his eyes. “It’s fine.”

“Perhaps, when all the children are finished hatching…”

Will hugs him tight. “It’s fine,” he repeats, “Just...stop, ok?”

“I would not keep you from her,” Hannibal says, rubbing his back, “But the adjustment is hard enough as it is.”

“I don’t want to talk about this,” Will hisses, “Just...stop.”

“As you wish.”

He watches the babies swim, lost in their happiness, and feels tears fill his eyes.

He can’t please everyone, he knows that, but having Bev mad at him is hard to take after everything.

Will looks up at Hannibal. “Are you happy?”

He frowns. “Now? Not particularly. I don’t like when you’re upset.”

“No, I mean...right now, here, in this pool. Are you happy?”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “You mean am I happy with you and our children and even your father?”

“Yes.”

“Very.”

Will sighs. “I am,” he says, “Just...not...I don’t like when she’s...she’s my best friend.”

“I know, Will.”

“And…”

Hannibal pulls him in close and he buries his face against Hannibal's neck. "Just breathe, Mielasis. Everything is alright, this is just a bump in the road. Breathe, Will. Everything will be alright."

He closes his eyes and lets out a breath.

Everything is alright.

Will feels Hannibal's tentacles hug him and he smiles. "I love you."

"I love you."

Bev will understand eventually.

This is their time.

And for now, it's what they need.

Chapter 76

The rest of the afternoon it's hard not to think about his fight with Bev, if you could call it that, and by nightfall he's worn out from the day but he doesn't say anything.

Though Hannibal seems to know anyway.

His dad leaves after having a bit of a heated discussion with Hannibal, who seems irritated when he comes back to Will in the pool. The babies are all swimming, fed and diapered, which makes it easier to wrap arms around him.

"What was that about?"

"Your father...wants me to talk to you."

"About?"

"You seem tired, Will," he whispers, kissing Will's cheek as he nuzzles, "We're both worried you're overdoing this."

Will pulls away, frowning. "Overdoing what?"

He sighs. "The children are not yet all hatched, and it takes much out of you to care for them."

"So?"

"And I know you enjoy feeding them yourself."

“Who else will?” he asks, panic rising, “What are you talking about?”

Hannibal reaches for his hand and pulls it away. “Will…”

“What are you talking about? Tell me what you’re talking about.”

The eggs all start to get jumpy and Will tries to calm down, reaching out for them. They let him pull them close, thankfully, and he stares at Hannibal with red tinted eyes.

“Your father is buying a pump,” Hannibal says, “For milk.”

Will shakes his head. “No.”

“Will…”

He drops shift and gets out of the water, torn between putting the eggs back down and taking the babies that are already hatched. Tears fill his eyes. “NO! You see these?” he gestures down his body, “These are for them! I...I...I need to feed them all the time. Only me, I have to.”

Hannibal frowns but doesn’t move. “Will, you’re barely eating unless I feed you and you hardly have a moment of your own the last few days.”

“So?” he hisses, “I...I’m fine. I…”

“Things will only get harder,” Hannibal whispers, “This is only to help when you need it.”

Will sits back into the water, away from him, and lets the eggs bob as he pulls the babies closer to him. Some of them, mainly Emma and Ethan, fight to be on their own and he lets out a sob.

“I...I can’t...I have to be there! I…”

Hannibal comes over slowly, not saying a word, and Will can’t help but come to him for comfort even as he holds Dylan and Liam. They suckle at his chest as tears fall down his face.

“I can’t leave them,” he whispers, his voice shaking, “Not like she did.”

“Mielasis, no, that’s---”

He lifts his head, barely able to see through his tears. “They need me.”

“Yes, Will, they do,” Hannibal says, touching his cheek, “But there are times when you can ask for help. I’ve seen you struggling and there’s still two more to come.”

Will’s tail brushes Hannibal’s leg, and Hannibal touches Dylan’s head softly.

“I just...I feel like I have to be the one.”

“I know, Will but...,” Hannibal whispers, kissing Dylan’s head, “I would like to help, when you need me.”

Will feels Dylan wiggle and he hands him over to Hannibal who puts him on his shoulder.

“I know.”

He looks away and gets Liam to burp before he wiggles away to swim. Will feels lost, worried, and leans against Haninbal's shoulder as Dylan joins him.

"I don't want to take that connection away from you," Hannibal whispers, "But it does not make you less of a father to take help."

Will doesn't answer, just leans into him, and they watch the babies together until he hears his father come back. "Pizza!"

He doesn't move, not sure he can, and watches Michael walk toward the kitchen not saying a word.

"Do you wish for me to stay?"

Will shakes his head.

"Will…"

He turns away, torn, and the eggs all seem to want to be closer to him as Hannibal gets out of the water. They're bigger now, more than the others were, and it makes him feel better to see.

"I'm not leaving you," he whispers, touching each one.

The eggs wiggle a little, and he smiles.

Not ever.

Hannibal doesn't come back right away, but when he does Will smells the food and hears his stomach growl. He sits beside the pool and moves to feed Will, but Will grabs the pizza instead.

"I can do it myself," he mumbles, feeling a little light headed.

"As you wish."

They eat quietly, the strain between them hard not to feel, and when his father comes in he stands there awkwardly. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Will says, finishing his slice, "Everything's fine."

Michael frowns. "No, it isn't. I know when things are fine with the two of you, Kid. You're...oh. He told you."

"Dad…"

"You're pale," he says, "And it's only been a few days. You look like you've barely slept too. It's not good, Will."

"I'm fine."

"Will…"

"I'm *fine* ."

"Michael," Hannibal sighs, "We've already spoken of this. Please don't."

He groans, and takes a bite of pizza off his plate. “Fine, but the pump is in the kitchen if you need it.”

“We won’t.”

“Stubborn,” Michael mumbles, leaving down the hall, “You’ve always been stubborn.”

Will gets up from the pool and puts on his robe halfway to tears. The pizza is sitting out and he grabs two more slices, refusing to look at the box on the counter.

His nipples ache already, and are dripping but he ignores them.

He can do this.

The quiet of the kitchen doesn’t help much, and he suddenly feels like he needs to be with the kids again only to find Hannibal holding Dylan rocking back and forth. Will pauses, sniffling, and watches his mate care for their baby.

I’m sorry.

Hannibal looks up at him sadly. “No need to apologize, Will.”

“No, I…” he walks over and puts his hand on Hannibal’s arm, “I do need to, I just...it’s hard for me to even think of not...being there.”

“I only want you to be happy and healthy, Will, that’s all.”

“I know.”

“And if you do wish to continue the way things have been, then that’s fine. I just want you to tell me if you’re feeling less than able.”

A tear falls down Will’s cheek. “I am tired,” he confesses, his voice shaking, “But I just didn’t want to tell you or Dad. I just...I want to be here for them.”

“You are not her, Will,” Hannibal whispers, moving them over to the bassinet for him to put Dylan down, “And never will be. Your worry over this proves that, and I love you so much for caring so deeply for the children.”

Will kisses him softly, wrapping his arms around Hannibal’s neck. “We can do it later? You and me?”

Hannibal smiles. “Of course,” he whispers, touching his cheek, “Just you and I.”

Will leans in to him again just as two of the babies start to cry. They turn to see Emma and Ethan near one of the eggs, and Will runs over just as Emma grabs the egg to go underwater.

“Wait!” he yells, grabbing her.

The egg wiggles in her tiny grip and he sighs, putting it back in the water. “Be nice to the egg, sweetheart,” he says as he whines, “It’s not ready yet.”

Emma grabs for it again and Will scoops her up into his arms. “Hannibal, can you…?”

“Of course.”

He hands Emma to Hannibal just as Ethan reaches for the same egg just as his twin had. Will laughs, picking up as well, and he takes Liam at the same time. “I can’t leave you here either, little man.”

His sons whine, reaching out, and Will frowns as they seem determined to get back in the water.

“Hannibal?”

“I’m a bit preoccupied, Will, Emma has soiled her diaper.”

“I...something’s…”

He sets both babies back into the water and they head for the egg that seems just as excited to be near them. Will feels his heart beat faster as Liam grabs the egg, and before Will can even blink a tentacle shoots out of the egg’s shell.

“HANNIBAL! DAD!”

Hannibal runs over with Emma crying as she clings to his shoulder. “Is it…?”

“I’M COMING! I’M COMING!” his father yells as he comes into the room, “Where is it?”

A second tentacle comes out and grabs Liam’s arm, which only makes Liam grab hold. “Liam, be nice!”

The sudden crack as a head comes up next makes Will’s eyes widen, and before he can reach for Ethan there’s a third baby boy crying for his attention. He shifts, eager to get to Will, who jumps into the water in tears. “Hey baby,” he whispers, “I’m here, I’m…”

He picks up his fourth son and walks over to Hannibal who has tears in his eyes. “Hello there, Sebastian Thane,” Hannibal whispers, touching the baby’s cheek.

Sebastian whines, reaching for Will’s chest, and Will pulls him close.

“Five down,” he laughs, looking at the water, “One to go.”

The long egg seems to bob in the water among the broken shells of Sebastian’s egg, and Will picks up his other sons to keep them from playing in it. “I guess we have to drain it again.”

“I suppose so.”

“Can I…?” his father asks, coming close.

“You can touch him, Dad, it’s ok, just...no holding yet.”

His father puts a hand on Sebastian’s dark hair, no curls this time, and as he looks down at his son Will sees barely a hint of himself. Sebastian is all Hannibal. “You look just like your Daddy,” he whispers, “So handsome.”

“Hey now,” his father says, “He’s got your big ears.”

“Dad!”

Michael laughs. “I’m just trying to help.”

Will sniffles. “You can help by going to get the pump for me,” Will says, “We’re...gonna use it later.”

His father blinks. “Okay, Kid. I’ll be back. Yell if the last one comes!”

“I will.”

Will takes his sons over to the couch with Hannibal and hands him Ethan who’s happy to be with his twin. “I didn’t expect another one, not that fast.”

“They’re eager,” Hannibal whispers, kissing Sebastian’s cheek, “Just as I said.”

“Yeah,” Will sighs, “Just...one more to go.”

“Little Beverly,” Hannibal whispers, taking Will’s hand.

“If it’s a girl,” Will says, his chest hurting.

“Beverly is a fine name for a boy, Will. I have no problems with it.”

Will frowns. “Can you hand me the phone?”

“Of course.”

Hannibal puts Emma and Ethan in their bassinets and brings Will his cellphone. He takes a deep breath and Hannibal takes his hand as he dials.

Bev answers on the first ring.

“Will, I’m so sorry! I was just having a really hard time and I was upset that I couldn’t see the new sea babies but I’m…”

“We have another one,” he whispers, tears falling down his face, **“Sebastian.”**

“Oh my god! There’s five now?”

“Yeah,” he sniffles, **“I didn’t...I wanted to call you right away. I have five babies, Bev.”**

Bev’s sniffling makes him cry more.

“I can’t...Will, I...fuck I’m so proud of you, Graham.”

“I didn’t do anything.”

“Fuck that ,” she says, her voice shaking, *“You kept those babies in you for a month and then you popped them out and now you’re taking care of them. You...Will, you’re amazing.”*

Will sniffles as he lifts Sebastian onto his shoulder. **“Come over tomorrow?”**

“I’ll be there as soon as I possibly can, ok? And I’ll bring donuts, and baby clothes and...everything I can get my hands on.”

He laughs as Sebastian burps. **“Ok.”**

“I love you, Will.”

“I love you too, Bev.”

“Kiss the babies for me, and tell your sugar monster I’m still mad at him but a little less.”

“He can hear you.”

“I know. Goodnight Hannibal!”

Hannibal leans into the phone. **“Goodnight Beverly.”**

Will moves Sebastian to his other breast and Hannibal takes Dylan who whines.

“Goodnight Bev.”

“Goodnight Will.”

He ends the call and puts the phone on the table with a sigh.

“There are moments when we need to be alone, and there are moments when we need others. It’s ok to have both moments, Will.”

Will lays against him as he looks down at Sebastian.

“I know.”

“You missed her.”

“Yeah.”

“Perhaps,” Hannibal says, kissing his temple, “With her here tomorrow...our Beverly will make an appearance.”

Will smiles. “Even if the egg isn’t ready, that’s ok too,” he sighs, touching Sebastian’s head, “I...I’m ok with waiting a little longer.”

Hannibal hugs him from behind. “Everything happens for a reason, Will,” he whispers, “Even this.”

“I know.”

“When he’s asleep,” Will whispers, blushing, “You wanna show me how that pump works?”

Hannibal kisses his cheek softly. “It would be my pleasure.”

Chapter 77

“It won’t be much longer now.”

The breast pump is a bit uncomfortable to sit through, but it doesn’t hurt, and after a while Will is just more tired than anything. They pump out about a full bottle between all of his nipples, and he’s a little sore but Hannibal takes the milk to freeze leaving him alone on the couch.

The babies are all asleep, thankfully, and he's already barely awake by the time Hannibal returns.

Hannibal lays on the edge of the couch and touches his cheek. “Any soreness?”

“A bit,” Will sighs, smiling, “But...I think...it’s gonna be a good thing.”

“As do I.”

Will pulls on his arm. “Sleep with me.”

“You don’t have to ask, Mielasis,” Hannibal whispers, laying down and pulling Will on top of him, “Not now and not ever.”

It doesn’t take long for Will to completely succumb to his exhaustion, though he wakes up after what feels like barely much time at all when all five of his hatched babies start to cry. He sits up, eyes adjusting to the dark, and Hannibal seems to come out of nowhere bringing him the first two babies.

“Where were you?”

“I was in the washroom,” he whispers, kissing Will’s cheek, “I apologize for my lateness.”

“It’s ok,” Will sighs, laying down and opening his robe, “I just missed you.”

Hannibal brings him all five babies and they start to suckle, which isn’t much fun for Will’s soreness but he sighs as Hannibal nuzzles his cheek.

“I apologize for making you miss me.”

He smiles. “You should.”

The babies are eager, as always, and between the two of them they get all five burped and changed before letting them swim a while.

“You can go back to sleep if you’d like,” Hannibal whispers, sitting on the floor still as the babies swim.

“I’m good,” Will says, smiling as he watches, “I might even join them if I can get up.”

“Alright.”

The babies are naturals in the water, even with the moonlight being their only way to see through the dark, and Will’s eyelids feel heavy as he watches. “Should we turn on the light?”

“They’re adjusting to the dark,” Hannibal says, “It’s good for them.”

“You’re sure?”

“Yes.”

The lone egg seems eager to play, bobbing along with the babies who poke at it a few times but mostly leave it alone. “They’re only a few days old and they act so much older.”

“Did you expect our children to not be advanced, Will?”

“I mean, I didn’t really know all that much about babies at all so…”

“Our kind grows naturally but are quite adept as soon as we hatch. It’s very common for our kind to even speak in only a few months.”

Will’s chest aches as he sits up, and Hannibal sits beside him, pulling Will in close.

“They won’t,” he says, his voice shaking, “I mean...they’re not gonna grow up to like ten tomorrow or anything, right?”

“No,” Hannibal says, “They’ll grow a bit fast now that they’ve hatched but not so much that you’ll miss seeing them get older.”

“And...I mean...we have to take them out sometime.”

“Their eagerness to be in the water will pass, Mielasis, they’re still desperate to grow. I think with time we can teach them to be discreet.”

Will sighs as he lays against him. “I’m not sure I want to teach them to hide themselves.”

“They’ll have to,” Hannibal says, grabbing his hand, “It’s safer.”

He sighs. “I wish they didn’t have to.”

“As do I.”

Will drifts off again not long after, and when he wakes up again it’s morning. The scent of bacon and eggs is in the air and he sits up to stretch. The babies are all sound asleep while their egg just bobs in the water.

“Good morning, Beverly,” he says, touching it.

The egg wiggles and he smiles before following the scent of breakfast. He’s surprised to find his Dad and Hannibal both in the kitchen. “Oh,” he says, frowning, “This is...not what I expected this morning.”

His father smiles. “Good morning to you too, Son.”

Will looks back and forth between them. “Is everything ok?”

“Of course,” Hannibal says, flipping eggs on the stove, “Your father was just telling me about your first year.”

He smiles. “Oh yeah?”

“Yes, he says you were quite advanced though you did not shift or really be much different at all than grow and speak quicker than most.”

Michael takes a piece of bacon from a plate beside Hannibal. “Your old man says that it’s because I kept you from water, which...I mean...you’re still ok.”

“Yeah, Dad.”

He frowns. “You don’t...I mean...you’re not mad about that, are ya Kid?”

“No, I...you didn’t know what to do with me and I get that.”

He puts his hand on Will’s arm. “I didn’t, but...that didn’t make me love you any less. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“Breakfast is ready,” Hannibal says, making them turn to him, “We can make our plates here and eat in the living room.”

Will smiles. “It’s gotta kill you to keep eating there when there’s a perfectly good dining room.”

He kisses Will softly. “No,” he whispers, “I’m perfectly happy to be close to our children and you. It doesn’t bother me at all.”

“Liar.”

They all go back to the living room where not much seems to have changed.

Will realizes that he left the babies alone without feeling anxious or scared at all and pauses to take that in.

“Will?”

“I...I didn’t even...I just left them.”

“They were fine, Will.”

“I know, but...I’ve been so scared to do that without one of you staying with them.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Are you upset?”

“No, it’s just weird how easy that was.”

“You feel safe here,” Michael says, taking a bite of his eggs, “Which is good, considering...what happened.”

Will nods as checks on each of his children one by one, and then sits on the floor beside the pool to eat. Hannibal pulls him in close when he sits right behind him and they all eat in a comfortable silence.

Though that silence is soon broken by knocks at the door.

“Will! Will let me in!”

He jumps up, excited, and practically runs to the door where Bev is waiting with bags of what look like presents. “Bev, it’s...kinda early isn’t it?”

Bev scoffs. “You’ve made me wait long enough, let me in.”

Will steps aside and she puts down the bags rushing to the nearest bassinet. “They’re asleep,” he whispers, “Don’t…”

Her eyes go wide as she looks down. “Oh god this one looks just like you.”

“I know,” he laughs, “I...I think a lot of them do.”

She smiles. “You’re a dad to...” she looks out, “ *Five* . Five sea babies, Will.”

“Six,” Hannibal says from the floor, gesturing to the pool, “There’s still one to come.”

Bev goes to the pool and kneels down. “Oh wow, look at little eggy,” she whispers, dipping her fingers in the water, “Poor thing.”

“They’re taking their time,” Will says, “It’s ok.”

She frowns. “Sorry if...I mean....I *did* call but you didn’t answer.”

Will smiles. “It’s ok, though what time did you wake up to go shopping?”

“Early,” she says, grinning, “And I got the best stuff. Let me show you!”

His father laughs. “I think these are gonna be the most spoiled kids on Earth.”

“Is that a bad thing?” Hannibal asks.

Will leans against him and smiles. “Nope.”

Bev lugs over the many bags she brought along and starts taking out bright colored clothes, toys, and even bottles. “I didn’t know if you were using bottles or binkies yet but...look at all the ocean stuff!”

Will laughs. “Oh my god.”

“Isn’t it adorable?” she says, holding up an outfit with fishes all over it.

“It is,” Will says, “Though I’m not sure they’ll…”

The babies all start to cry at the same time and his nipples ache as his father stands up.

“And...that’s my cue. Cute clothes.”

Will sighs as he gets up, and goes to the couch as Hannibal brings over the first two babies.

“Um…”

She backs up. “Don’t want to show me the nips?”

Will blushes. “Not really.”

“I can sit in your old bedroom for a bit, ok? But first, can I change a diaper?”

“Um, sure?”

They change all five babies, who are oddly happy around Bev, and when she's gone Haninbal brings them to Will again. He lays back and sighs. "I should've pumped, huh?"

"There's still time later."

"Not enough."

The babies eat and Will keeps two while Hannibal puts the others in the water but Dylan wants to stay with Will. She stares wide eyed as the babies swim, and Will holds Dylan close to him as they snuggle.

"They're better swimmers than I am!" she laughs.

"Same," Will says tiredly, "I...I'm glad you're here."

Bev smiles. "Me too."

Bev sits on the floor as the babies swim and just stares until Will realizes that the egg is moving closer to her. She reaches out to touch it and the egg bumps her hand.

"It likes me!" she laughs.

"Yeah, I...I guess it should."

"Why? Cuz I'm its egg aunt?"

Will looks at Hannibal who takes Dylan, now asleep again, and comes over to sit beside her on the floor.

“No,” he whispers, touching the egg again, “Because once this one hatches...we planned on naming them Beverly.”

Bev stares at him in shock. “What?”

“Beverly,” he repeats, “Hannibal says it’s a good name no matter what their gender is but I…”

The egg hops up a little and he laughs. “I think it likes Beverly already. Huh, sweetheart?”

Bev’s sudden sniffles make him look at her again and he frowns seeing her wipe her face.

“Bev?”

“You’re naming one of your kids after me,” she whispers, her voice shaking, “I...I can’t….” she looks back at Hannibal, “You’re ok with this?”

He smiles. “We’ve discussed it and I’m much more than ok, Beverly. You’re a very important person in our lives, so of course we’d want to name one of the children after you.”

Bev laughs and more tears fall down her face. “I don’t...I…”

Beverly egg hops up again, bumping her hand, and much to Will’s shock suddenly there’s a crack. “Hannibal! DAD!”

“Oh shit!” Bev says, “I...oh god, it’s coming?”

Hannibal puts Dylan in the bassinet and kneels down beside Will as his father runs in.

“IS IT HAPPENING?”

“YES!”

They all watch in silent wonder as Beverly’s egg begins to break, and out comes a red eyed baby girl with brown curls full shifted. She swims over and Will picks her up, laughing.

“Hey baby,” he whispers, “I…I’m happy to see you.”

Hannibal hugs Will tight and reaches out to touch her head as Bev suddenly bursts into loud sobs.

“Oh my god she’s beautiful and terrible at the same! I love her so much!”

Will puts her close to his chest and she latches on, shifting back again. Hannibal runs his fingers through her hair as his father cleans up the mess.

“No more of this,” he laughs, “But...she’s gorgeous.”

“Thank you, Dad.”

Bev reaches out but stops. “Can I touch her?”

“Sure,” Will whispers, as she runs fingers over baby Beverly’s cheek.

“She’s perfect,” Bev says, sniffling, “Just perfect. Thanks for letting me be here, I might’ve missed this.”

“I think she was waiting for you,” Hannibal says, smiling, “Weren’t you?”

Baby Beverly says nothing, just pulling closer to Will, but he thinks the same. “We have six babies,” he whispers, turning to smile at Hannibal, “Six.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “For now.”

Will grins. “Yeah.”

Bev laughs. “Oh god you’re gonna need a bigger house.”

They all laugh as they stare at baby Bev, but suddenly the other four babies in the water swim over. Will climbs in the water, dropping his robe, and lays down with Beverly still on his chest.

“And...now I’ve seen you naked.”

Will laughs. “Sorry, I just...they want to see her.”

Bev shrugs. “It was bound to happen eventually.”

The babies all come close, touching their newest sibling, and he hears Dylan cry from the bassinet. “Hannibal?”

“I’ll get him.”

Hannibal brings Dylan over and Will lays there feeding his newest little girl while the other babies swim beside him.

He can’t stop crying but that’s ok.

They’re happy tears.

His babies are all here, and his family is with him.

This summer has been the strangest, most wonderful thing to ever happen to him.

And there’s still so much more to come.

Chapter 78

Bev stays most of the afternoon, helping Will take care of the babies while Hannibal is close by though he's not sure where.

"You're doing it again," Bev teases, touching Dylan's head, "Looking all dreamy and also worried."

Will frowns. "I'm just...Hannibal's usually here."

"He's just leaving us alone, Will, I'm sure he's fine."

"I know he's fine, it's just...weird."

She frowns as Will lifts Dylan up to be burped. "It feels weird not to be close to him?"

"A little."

"I mean, you're gonna get monster married or whatever right? Maybe you're still clingy about that."

"I guess."

Bev touches Emma's back and keeps her steady as she feeds from him. "Okay, I've held it in long enough."

Will smiles. "What?"

“I think...I might be in love.”

His face falls. “Bev…”

“Wait,” she says, shaking her head, “It’s fast, I know that...but...I mean...you were pretty much in love with Hannibal the day you met him.”

“That was because we’re both sea creatures and could feel a different type of connection.”

She bites her lip as she looks away. “I just...I haven’t even met her face to face yet but just seeing her smile over facetime is just...Will, I...I *know* it’s her. We fit.”

Will smiles. “I mean, I’m happy for you. I just want you to be safe.”

“I know, Graham, I know.”

“Is she as weird as you?”

Bev sticks out her tongue. “Oh shut up, she’s amazing and yes she’s a little weird but in an amazing way. She’s not as into murder shit like we are but she’s way into like history. I think she knows more about this area than Hannibal probably does. She’s studying to be a librarian, so…”

“So she’s a reader?”

“Oh yeah, she’s even got me to read a few books that aren’t about murder too.”

“Wow.”

Bev laughs, blushing a little. “I’m serious, she’s...she’s just different.”

Will puts his hand on her arm as he lifts two of the babies off of his nipples, and begins to rock them a little. “That’s great, Bev. What’s her---”

A loud crash makes them both pause, and soon Hannibal comes through the kitchen looking murderous.

“Hannibal?”

His eyes are bright red, teeth already sharp, and when he looks at Will he seems to calm.

“I...I apologize.”

“What’s got you all riled up?” Bev asks.

Hannibal walks over to the couch and sits on the floor by Bev, touching Will’s arm. “I was trying to speak with a contractor about the house, and they say it’s not possible to expand without total demolition.”

Will’s eyes widen. “Hannibal, no!” he shouts, waking Dylan and Beverly who start to cry, “You can’t do that.”

Hannibal takes baby Beverly into his arms to soothe her, standing up to rock back and forth. “I know, Mielasis, I know.”

Bev frowns at them. “Expanding?”

“We were planning on moving to the house Hannibal grew up in,” Will says, watching him as he takes Dylan too, “I just...after Leanne…”

“You’re moving?”

“Maybe,” Will says, “It’s only an hour or so away.”

She frowns. “Oh.”

“You can still come over! And we have a lake and I can take the boat to see you!”

Bev smiles. “Okay. I’d just miss you.”

Hannibal gently sets Dylan and Beverly into the bassinets. “We may not be moving at all, unless I lose the house entirely.”

Will frowns. “I don’t want you to do that.”

“I know, Will.”

Bev sighs, standing, “I think that’s my cue to leave.”

“Bev, wait it’s…”

“I was going to make lunch,” Hannibal says, frowning, “I apologize if my outburst upset you.”

“Nah, it’s not that. I have a date,” she says, winking, “She just gets off work soon, so…”

“You’re seeing someone?” Hannibal asks.

“Yep,” she says, heading for the door, “We met online, she’s...she’s great. We’re planning on meeting up soon in person so maybe you guys can meet her too.”

“I’m sure we’d love to,” Hannibal says, “What is your new paramour’s name?”

Bev has the door half open when she turns back to smile at them. “Chiyoh,” she says, blushing, “She...here let me show you a picture.”

Will feels sick as she pulls out her phone and there’s no doubt about it that Chiyoh is the sea creature they met not too long ago. He doesn’t know what to say so she just smiles, and shares a look with Hannibal. “She’s pretty.”

“Isn’t she? I gotta go, but call me ok?”

“Okay, thanks Bev, it’s...it’s been great.”

She winks at him. “See you later.”

The minute she’s gone Will’s vision reddens, and Hannibal climbs onto the couch to hold him close. “Will…”

“How *dare* she?” he hisses, shaking, “I can’t...how…”

“Breathe, Will,” Hannibal whispers, “We don’t know that Chiyoh is using Beverly to get to us.”

“Why wouldn’t she be?” he growls, “It’s just like Abby all over again! I...I have to tell her.”

“Will, it’s...I don’t believe it’s your place.”

He pushes Hannibal back. “What?”

Sebastian and Liam both start to cry and Hannibal takes them from Will who still holds the others. “We don’t yet know that Chiyoh has ulterior motives. I think perhaps it’s best to wait.”

“Hannibal, she’s my best friend. I can’t have this happen to her twice.”

“Chiyoh has not hurt Beverly, and when they meet perhaps you can accompany her.”

Will blinks back tears. “I...I don’t think I can hold myself back.”

“Yes, you can.”

He feels Emma and Ethan suck hard on his nipple and winces, running his shifted hands over their heads. “I just want her to be happy.”

“I know, Will.”

“I want...I just…”

Hannibal lifts his chin up with two fingers and kisses Will softly. “You would do anything for those you love, Will, and that’s not a bad thing. But for now, let this wait. Beverly is happy, and this may just be an unfortunate coincidence.”

Will nods, and lifts the twins up to his shoulders. “Sorry I freaked out.”

“It’s understandable.”

“I just...I didn’t expect it, and with everything that’s happened…”

Hannibal kisses his temple and he sighs. “There’s no need to apologize.”

The twins both fall asleep not long after, and Hannibal pulls Will into his arms. “We should go for a swim soon.”

Will smiles. “You think that’s gonna get my mind off of this?”

“Yes, but also...I just enjoy being in the water with you.”

Will nuzzles his neck. “I do too.”

“Perhaps your father can look after them.”

“Six kids?”

“He’s dealt with children before.”

“One,” Will laughs, “And what if they’re hungry?”

Hannibal turns back and lifts the breast pump. “You have so far four bottles ready to be given. That would be more than enough for a swim.”

Will kisses him softly. “Maybe.”

“After lunch, perhaps?”

He feels some slickness from his backside and his teeth feel heavy in his mouth.
“Hannibal…”

“Or now?”

“I’m hungry,” he teases, “What are you gonna feed me in the water?”

“Whatever we find.”

Will laughs. “I’ve never...I mean...you’ve done that?”

“Eaten raw fish? Of course I have.”

“It’s not…”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Will, our teeth are sharp and pointed. Did you think that was for cheeseburgers and pizza?”

He blushes. “No, but...I mean…”

“Would you like to hunt with me, Will?”

Will growls. “Yes.”

“Then perhaps, we should hunt.”

Will whimpers as Hannibal reaches for his cock, stroking just a little, and his stomach growls loudly. “Hannibal…”

His father suddenly coughs, and Will buries his head into Hannibal’s chest. “I...um...I was just....it’s been awfully quiet in here.”

“We’re fine, Dad,” Will mumbles, blushing so hard he’s sure he’ll burst into flame.

“Ah, ok,” his father mumbles, “I just...I heard yellin’ earlier and I wanted to be sure.”

“We’re just discussing having sexual relations in the lake, Michael,” Hannibal says, making Will groan, “And letting you watch the children.”

“Jesus Christ, Hannibal you...you didn’t have to tell me that.”

“Was that not what you asked?”

He sighs. “You want to have some time, just ask me. I don’t want to know anything else, ok? I’d die a happy man not knowin’ my kid is bumpin’ uglies with an old sea monster in the lake.”

Will starts laughing, and Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Noted. Will?”

He lifts his head. “I love you so much, but you also be so…”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “So…?”

Will grins. “I’m not finishing that sentence.”

“Oh god, just go!”

Hannibal gets up off the couch, and Will stands feeling a little sore. He pulls his robe closed, and smiles at his Dad. “You sure this is okay?”

Michael frowns. “Yeah, yeah,” he mumbles, “But are *you* sure you’re ok bein’ away from them?”

Will frowns. “I...I think so,” he says, surprised he means it, “As long as they’re with you.”

His father smiles. “Alright, Kid, just go. Don’t tell me nothin’.”

“There’s bottles in the fridge,” Will says, rushing to the door, “And you know where everything else is.”

“Yeah, yeah, go on.”

“And if they cry too much that just means they want to swim!”

“I got it! Just go!”

Hannibal pulls Will out the door so fast they’re at the edge of the lake even before Will’s got his robe open. He throws the robe open and jumps in, excited to be in the water again. His shift drops immediately and Hannibal pulls him into a kiss.

He purrs, humming, and Hannibal’s claw digs into his sides just before he takes off.

Will laughs, following, and they’re about to turn when they both smell it.

Prey.

He feels his mouth water as he growls, rushing toward the smell as Hannibal leads. There's smaller prey they pass along the way but this one is theirs. He can feel it on his tongue already. Will sees the movement from afar and stops, eyes wide when he realizes.

This...this isn't it, right?

No, Will. This is just lunch. Our mating will be of more importance. You will know.

Will can't help the disappointment he feels but still he rushes forward just as Hannibal grabs the large bass from above. They tear it apart, piece by piece, and the taste is better than anything Will's ever had in his entire life. He's desperate to feel Hannibal inside him by the last bite, grabbing him roughly, and he smashes their mouths together hard.

Fuck me. Hannibal please.

Hannibal grabs his hand, pulling them away, and when they get to the cave Will is already whimpering. He thrusts into him without a word, grunting as he bites Will's neck, and Will hums as he feels him over and over again.

"I love you," he growls, "I...oh god…"

He doesn't stop, can't, and Will is clutching the rocks as he comes so hard he's lightheaded. Hannibal squeezes his nipples, one by one, making him cry out desperate for more.

"Mine," Hannibal growls, "All…"

"Always yours," Will whispers, "Always."

“Will…”

“Don’t stop,” Will begs, “Don’t…”

Hannibal groans as he keeps on, never seeming to tire, and when he finally comes Will can barely stay upright. He turns his head as Hannibal spills inside him, and Hannibal kisses him again biting his tongue.

That was amazing.

You are amazing.

Shallow thrusts follow, and they share their song as Hannibal sits them up on the rocks after. He lays back against him and smiles, his whole body thrumming in happiness.

“We needed that.”

“Mmm,” Hannibal sighs, “Yes.”

“Is it gonna be like that after...we get…”

“Better, Mielasis,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, “I promise you...it will be better.”

Will kisses his chest. “I want to do it now.”

“I know, Will.”

“Maybe we should’ve...I should’ve said yes about Leanne.”

Hannibal turns his cheek and frowns at him. “No, Will,” he whispers, shaking his head. “You were right. We don’t want her to be a part of us anymore. She didn’t deserve that.”

“But…”

He touches Will’s cheek. “We will know when we’ve found our prey,” he says, “But for now...we know that we belong to one another, don’t we?”

Will smiles. “Yes.”

“Do you wish to swim some more or go back?”

He feels a sudden need for the babies, and bites his lip.

“Will...if you want to be with the children, you can tell me.”

Will frowns. “I know it hasn’t been all that long but...I’d feel better if we went back.”

“As you wish.”

Will goes first through the cave’s entrance, and though he knows he’s supposed to wait he takes off in a rush. He feels Hannibal at his back and can’t help but smile as he grabs him from behind fast.

“I found you.”

“I knew you would.”

“I could find you anywhere.”

Will blinks back tears. “I know, Hannibal,” he whispers, touching his cheek, “I know.”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “Will…”

“You make me so happy.”

He smiles. “That’s all I’ve ever wanted to do, Mielasis. From that very first moment, that’s all I’ve ever wanted to do.”

Will smiles. “Yeah?”

“Yes.”

“You do,” he whispers, “You really really do.”

They kiss again softly, wrapped in an embrace just before a loud yell makes them pull apart.

“OH GOD IT’S EVERYWHERE!”

Will laughs.

“I think it’s time to go back.”

Hannibal smiles.

“Lead the way.”

Chapter 79

They stop in the doorway to look at what made his father yell and Will has to hold back a laugh.

The majority of the babies are swimming in the pool while Emma is lying on the couch with his father looking horrified at the state of her diaper.

“Oh thank God,” he says, “It’s...I’ve never seen so much shit out of a little baby before.”

Hannibal walks up to take over, wiping her down with ease, and Will looks at the bassinet.

“We got this, Dad,” he says, smiling, “Sorry we…”

His father sighs. “You weren’t gone that long, Son,” he says, patting Will’s shoulder, “I just...I guess I wasn’t entirely ready for six sea babies.”

Will smiles, peeling off the mattress cover as he walks toward the kitchen to wash it.

“I wasn’t either, Dad, but...I think I’m doing ok.”

Michael smiles. “You’re doing great, Kid. Honestly, I...I’m real proud of you.”

His chest aches as he washes the mess down the drain. “Thanks, Dad.”

“You seem happy,” he says, as Will takes the cover into the laundry room to wash.

“I am happy, Dad,” he says, tossing it in, as he turns back around, “I’ve never been happier than I am right now.”

“Good,” Michael says, “I might not like him, but if he makes you happy I’ll focus on that.”

“Oh shut up,” Will laughs, walking toward the living room again, “You totally like him.”

“I do not!”

They find Hannibal with Emma, who is not nearly as messy as his father made her out to be, and is wearing one of the outfits Bev left. She’s sound asleep in Hannibal’s arms and Will has the sudden urge to be closer to them both so he sits on the couch.

“That was fast,” he whispers, touching her head.

“Yes, I think she just missed her father.”

Will’s Dad makes a sound and Will smirks. “I’m sure she was just testing her Grandpa.”

“Hey, I took care of all six by myself for almost an hour!”

Hannibal smiles over at him. “Just wait until they start to walk, Michael,” he teases, “I’m sure you’ll be able to keep up.”

“I...I totally...oh fuck off,” Michael says, stomping off.

“That was mean,” Will whispers, laying his head on Hannibal’s shoulder.

“I was merely telling the truth. I’m not sure what was so mean about that.”

Will smiles.

“Yes, you do.”

“I suppose if your father can’t take a gentle ribbing then that may be construed as mean, but I stand by my initial assessment.”

He takes Hannibal’s hand and watches the other babies swim in the pool.

“I want you guys to get along, and he’s...I mean...Dad’s…”

Hannibal kisses Will’s hand. “I will try to be nicer to your father in the future while we share a home.”

“Thank you.”

“Though I hope to have a home big enough for us alone sooner rather than later.”

Will frowns. “I don’t want you to have to tear down the place you grew up, ok? I mean, I don’t exactly have the happiest of memories here but...if this is where we’re supposed to be then I’ll be ok with it.”

“Will…”

He squeezes his hand. “I mean it, Hannibal. I don’t want you to do something like that for me.”

Hannibal kisses his hand again, and puts Will's palm to his cheek.

"I would do anything for you, Mielasis, you know that."

"I do, but...I'd do anything for you too."

Hannibal smiles. "I'll figure a way to make things just right."

"H…"

Will's cell phone rings and he sighs, getting up from the couch to see who's calling him. He frowns.

"What is it?"

"It's Molly Foster."

He watches Hannibal's eyes turn red. "Do not answer it."

"I mean, she's literally only called me one time. Why would she be calling now?"

"Will…"

"I just...I know she's had a tough time and it's not like…"

Hannibal comes over to take the phone out of his hand so fast Will's shocked, and when it hits the floor he freezes. "Mine," he growls, pulling Will close even as he carries Emma.

Will frowns. “Hannibal?”

He can feel him shaking against him and turns to hug him tight.

“I...I apologize.”

“Are you ok?”

“I do not want you to talk to Molly Foster.”

“I guessed that,” Will whispers, taking Emma and putting her in Ethan’s bassinet while the other babies are swimming, “I’m not...you know I love you so I don’t...I mean, you know that. Right?”

Hannibal nods as Will sits down beside him again.

“Yes, I...I’m not sure what came over me.”

“Jealousy.”

“Yes, but...I’m unsure of why it happened so suddenly. Molly Foster is…”

Will takes his hand. “Molly Foster is a vapid, immature, stuck up brat. She’s pretty, but that’s about it. I honestly only almost kissed her way back when because I was pining so much for you.”

“Will…please just...I don’t want to hear you speak of her.”

“She means nothing,” he whispers, kissing Hannibal’s neck, “Absolutely nothing.”

Hannibal sighs. “Meilasis…I…”

Will lifts his head. “What about her?” he asks, making Hannibal turn.

“What do you mean, what about her?”

He gets up off the couch and lets his robe fall walking back into the pool to be with the babies. They come close as he gets in, and he lets Dylan and Ethan suckle above the water.

“For our monster wedding,” he sighs, wincing, “What about her?”

Hannibal shifts as he comes to the water, climbing into the water with him, and he pulls Will into his arms. “You wish to kill and eat Molly Foster?”

“We both don’t like her,” he sighs, “And you’re still jealous so...it means something.”

He nips at Will’s neck. “She has family.”

“I can find out when she’ll be alone,” he sighs, “And judging by how much they let her get away with at that party last month, I doubt her parents are around all that much.”

Hannibal growls. “Will…it’s a risk.”

Will drops shift as Hannibal touches his cheek. “We’ve been looking for so long, Hannibal, I just...I want to be mated to you. Don’t you want that too?”

“You know, I do.”

“No one would know.”

“The children, they…”

“Bev and Dad can watch the kids at the other house.”

“You think Beverly will condone this?”

Will kisses him then, can’t not, and Hannibal drops shift at the touch. “She doesn’t like Molly either. Hannibal…”

He touches Will’s face. “Will, I just...I need to be sure we’ll be safe.”

“I know, and...we will. We…”

Dylan wiggles and Hannibal takes him as Will does the same to Ethan. They share a look, and he can imagine fully tearing Molly Foster apart with Hannibal by his side. His teeth feel heavy in his mouth.

“We need to be sure it’s safe.”

Will’s heart beats faster. “Hannibal…”

He kisses Will’s cheek. *I want everything with you, Mielasis, but I want it forever. We can’t be reckless.*

Will squeezes his hand. *I know.*

Will's lost in the haze of the next few hours, happy when the babies each go down, and waits as Hannibal brings back Emma's mattress covers fresh from the wash to have her join them. They climb onto the couch after and Hannibal holds him tight as he drifts off.

"I used to dream of being mated," Hannibal whispers, kissing Will's neck, "Just like my parents."

"Why?"

"I felt very out of place with the human children," he says, "And knew none of them were mine...until I smelled your scent."

"I'm part human."

"Yes, but...she means nothing of who you are now."

"She's my mother."

"Not in the way that counts."

Will frowns as he closes his eyes. "I know, but…"

"She brought you into this world, Will, and attempted instantly to take you out of it. As far as I'm concerned, you were born of two monsters. The human part of you comes from Michael, and he nurtured you in ways she never could. I'm grateful for that, and…that he saved you. Otherwise we would not be where we are now."

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “You were born to be mine, Will,” he whispers, “Just as I was born to be yours. Make no mistake about that.”

“I love you so much.”

“And I love you, Mielasis.”

Will squeezes his hand and turns to kiss him softly in the dark.

“I want it to be Molly,” he says, “She was a mistake I almost made and to erase her from the world...it’ll make that disappear.”

Hannibal hugs him tighter. “She’s done nothing wrong. Are you prepared to take her life just to better your own?”

“Yes,” Will growls, “She’s a horrible person and...I don’t care if she lives or dies.”

“Your father…”

“This is about us,” Will says, dropping shift in his arms, “It’s about...our family. They don’t need to know.”

“You said before you thought Beverly would approve.”

He sighs. “I don’t know that, and I...I need it to be her. Now that she called and I have an in I just...I feel it has to be her.”

“Will…”

“We won’t leave a single part behind. They don’t need to know.”

He can feel Hannibal’s hardness at his backside and bucks back against him. “Mielasis….”

“They’ll think she’s gone,” he sighs, as Hannibal rocks against him, “That she just...vanished.”

“Will…”

“Nothing left,” he groans as Hannibal thrusts into him, “Not...one…”

Hannibal covers Will’s mouth with his as he slowly fucks him, dropping shift as his tentacles wrap around Will’s cock. He swallows Will’s groans as he moves faster, and they both know the babies can wake any minute so his thrusts become more intense as he flips Will onto his belly. Will bites Hannibal’s tongue as his relentless pace doesn’t stop. Two tentacles wrap around Will’s cock, their strokes quickening as Hannibal suddenly groans still fucking him until Will comes hard with tears falling down his cheeks. They collapse on top of each other, shifting back, and Hannibal turns Will around so fast he’s dizzy. He licks away Will’s passion, growling, and Will runs fingers through his hair.

“I love you so much.”

And I love you.

He crawls up to kiss Will after, lips still wet from Will’s come, and they lay there panting in each other’s arms.

“I’ll look into Molly Foster in the morning,” Hannibal whispers, “I promise.”

Will smiles. “Thank you.”

He lays there after, staring at the pool in the moonlight, and feels Hannibal fall asleep behind him. Will’s never felt more at ease, not in his entire life, and as he closes his eyes his tears are happy ones.

He’s getting monster married.

He can hardly wait.

Chapter 80

The babies all wake up at the same time the next morning, eager for food, and Hannibal takes three babies on bottles while Will has the others. Will feels a deep heat between them, sharing looks with him across the room, and his father doesn't seem to notice over breakfast.

"I thought I'd take the boat out today," he says, chewing on the sausage Hannibal made that may or may not be made of human meat, "Is that ok?"

"Of course," Hannibal says, lifting both Emma and Ethan up on his shoulders, "You should check to make sure there's enough gas. I can't remember the last time we didn't just...swim to our destinations."

Will blushes as he looks at him, licking his lips, and yeah it might be weird to think about murdering Molly with Hannibal while he feeds his children but he can't stop it.

It's been so long, and he just wants to be monster married so badly.

As do I, Mielasis. I can hardly wait to feel our bond.

Will feels baby Beverly wiggle at his lower nipples and lifts her up, tapping her on the back while his father keeps talking. He can hardly think of anything else, so much so that he's sure it'll make every minute until the event that much harder.

"...and then I'll go to the bait shop, maybe pick up…"

"Dad?" he asks, letting out a breath, "Bring Hannibal with you."

Hannibal and his father both look at him like he's grown a second head.

“What? Will, why…”

“You know more about the area, and it would be a good bonding experience. Right? I can handle things here for a few hours. We’ll probably all take a nap after breakfast anyway.”

Hannibal narrows his eyes as his Father scratches the back of his neck. “Well, I suppose…”

What are you playing at, Will?

You can take the boat near the Fosters’ dock, and maybe see how things are there. We need to figure things out and you promised.

Hannibal looks troubled, and his father still seems like this is the last thing he wants to do.

“Well, I guess that’s not the worst thing. I suppose.”

Hannibal sighs. “I suppose a few hours fishing wouldn’t be...entirely horrible.”

Will smiles as Hannibal puts Ethan in the pool, followed by Emma, ,and Dylan wiggles for his attention after. “See? They’ll be worn out from swimming. I’ll be fine.”

“You ever *been* fishin’ before, Hannibal?”

Hannibal looks at Will, and the memory of some of their “fishing” trips comes back full force. He feels wetness at his backside and wiggles on the couch. “Yeah, Dad,” he says, blushing as he looks down, “We went a...few times.”

“Yes, Will showed how to expertly use my...pole.”

His father is quiet for far too long before he speaks. “Did you fuck my son on that boat?”

“Of course not, Dad!” Will lies, “How would we even *do that* without people seeing us?”

Hannibal nods, and puts a hand on his father’s shoulder. “I assure you, Michael,” he says softly, “I have treated Will with the utmost respect the entirety of our relationship.”

Except for when you lied to me about who you were and didn’t tell me I could get pregnant.

He frowns.

Will…

Will smiles. “Totally.”

I’m fine, Hannibal. I was kidding.

Hannibal gets up from the table as his Dad keeps talking, and puts Dylan in the pool before he kneels down at Will’s side.

“I have apologized profusely for...my mistakes.”

“I know,” Will whispers, pulling him in closer, “I was joking, I swear.”

He kisses Will softly, every touch a brand, and he grows hotter with each press of lips until he’s not sure he can let Hannibal leave so soon.

“...hey now, we got kids in here!”

Will laughs. “Sorry, not sorry,” he teases, “If you want me to stop you’ll have to take him away.”

“I haven’t even finished my coffee yet!”

Will kisses Hannibal again, nibbling on his lip, and Sebastian whines when Hannibal gets too close.

“Alright, alright, I’m up.”

Hannibal pulls back and touches all three babies’ heads one by one as his Dad heads down the hall.

“I will report back what I find.”

“If this doesn’t work,” Will whispers, “We go to my plan.”

Hannibal frowns. “I don’t enjoy the prospect of you getting close to Molly Foster, even if it is to lure her into being killed.”

Will takes his hand and kisses it. “I know, but...that might be all we have.”

He squeezes Will’s hand, saying nothing, and the tension in his body makes Will frown. He’s not even sure Hannibal could handle him pretending to be into Molly, or Molly touching him in any way. But he wants this, and he wants it now.

His Dad comes back in fishing gear, and looks at them both oddly.

“Is that what he’s wearing?”

“There are other clothes I should wear?”

Will laughs. “It’s fine, Dad.”

“I’ve got clothes in my…”

Hannibal stands up with a sigh, taking off his suit coat and giving it to Will. “Better?”

“I guess,” he mumbles, “Ain’t you hot in that thing? We’re in Texas.”

“I’m a sea creature who is at home in the water. The temperature doesn’t bother me.”

“I guess,” Michael sighs, “C’mon then.”

“Have fun!” Will says, smiling as Hannibal gives him one last look, “Bring back something for me.”

“We will,” they both say, and Will waits until the door closes to let out a breath.

This trip is important, in more ways than one, and as he lifts each of the babies on him off one by one to burp he aches for Hannibal even more.

Molly Foster is living on borrowed time, and she doesn't even know it.

He gets into the water with the babies, and watches them swim, smiling as they bond. It's so strange how alert they are so soon, but it feels right. That familiar sadness that he missed this with his own siblings returns but he forces it back.

Now is not the time to think about that.

Or *her* .

The babies swim around for the next hour, though they start to get whiny, and he changes them all before they nap. He makes himself a snack, pumping more milk as he watches them, and thinks about joining the nap party just as his cell phone buzzes.

Will ends the pumping, closing the containers, and sits up to stare at his phone screen.

Molly.

He knows he shouldn't.

Hannibal wouldn't like it.

But he can't stop himself.

"Hello?"

"Will?"

“Hi Molly, it’s been a long time.”

Will can hear her sniffle on the other line, quieter than he remembers her to be, and coughs.

“You ok?”

“I just...needed a friend.”

“Oh,” he says, *“Is something wrong?”*

“No one will talk to me, or even come over. They treat me like I KILLED BRITNEY and I was there too, you know? I saw her! Why won’t they talk to me? Even my parents…”

Will’s teeth feel heavy in his mouth. *“Your parents?”*

“They went to Bali without me! They said it was a couple's vacation! Can you believe that?”

“Sorry.”

She sighs. ***“No one will come over, and I just want...I…if stupid Britney hadn’t gotten killed I would be having an AMAZING summer. But noo…”***

“I mean, I don’t think she got herself killed.”

Molly scoffs. ***“You know what I mean.”***

“Yeah, I...I mean, if you want you and I can go somewhere. Just us.”

"Just us?"

He drops shift and digs his claws into the table. *"You wanna?"*

"Totally! Maybe…"

A loud crash makes him look up to see Hannibal holding his Dad in his arms as blood drips down to the ground.

"I gotta go! I'm sorry!"

Will hangs up the phone and rushes to them. "Oh my god, what happened? You weren't even gone that long."

"I thought I had it!" Michael groans, "The damn thing was huge! I didn't think…"

Hannibal lays him on the couch. "Your father cut himself very badly. I need to go get my bag."

"Okay."

Will sits next to his Dad, worried, and blood drips down his hand even wrapped in the towel.

"I'm ok, Kid," he sighs, "Just fine."

"No, you're not."

“Will…”

His eyes fill with tears. “Dad, you have to be careful. You’re not...I mean...you want to live to see your grandmonsters get older, right?”

Michael frowns. “I do, Son, you know that.”

“So you can’t just throw yourself over boats or attack giant fish. You’re my Dad, and their Grandpa. We need you, ok?”

He nods. “Okay, Kid.”

Hannibal returns and works faster than Will’s ever seen sewing up the wound. He gives his Dad something for the pain and they both watch him pass out soon after. Will settles back into Hannibal’s arms and sighs.

“You scared the shit out of me.”

“I could tell.”

Will turns to breathe in his scent. “I can’t lose him.”

“It was a deep cut, Will, nothing more. I didn’t think I needed to supervise a grown man, but apparently I did.”

He sighs. “Thank you.”

“No need to apologize.”

Will hears his phone ring again and ignores it, climbing into Hannibal’s lap on the floor.

“Beverly?”

He pauses. “Um...maybe?”

Hannibal lifts his chin and frowns as he looks into his eyes. “Molly?”

“Hannibal…”

“I told you, Will,” he hisses, “I would handle things.”

“She called me,” Will whispers, “I took a chance and she said she’s home alone right now. She wants to hang out.”

Hannibal shakes his head. “It’s too convenient.”

“Convenient?” Will laughs, “Hannibal…”

“Your father cannot watch the children like this,” he snarls, looking away, “Not on his own. We’ll have to wait.”

“Bev can watch them,” he says, “I just need a little more milk for all of them.”

“Will…”

“I can call her, set things up…”

Hannibal pulls him in hard, his grip almost painful as he snarls. *And have them trace your phone to hers?*

Then I’ll go there! I…

He kisses Will, shaking, and Will wraps his arms around Hannibal’s neck. The tension going through him is immense, and when he pulls back Hannibal’s eyes are red.

“We can wait,” he says, touching his face, “But we’re doing this. We have to have a plan.”

Hannibal relaxes, pulling Will into his arms again, and kisses his neck. “Thank you.”

Will looks at the empty pool. “You wanna go for a swim?”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “With your father two feet away?”

He frowns, blushing as he pulls back. “Oh, I...I forgot.”

Hannibal smiles. “For now, we can take the bassinets into the bedroom and rest.”

Will sighs. “That sounds perfect.”

The babies are surprisingly still asleep when they roll the bassinets into the bedroom, and they climb into Will’s bed together. He plasters himself to Haninbal’s side, and nibbles on his neck.

“The monster wedding,” he whispers, “We kill her together, eat her heart, and then?”

“Then we’ll engage in sexual intercourse, bite one another, and the bond will form.”

Will sighs. “I already feel like we’re bonded. Or I feel something, I guess?”

“That’s a preliminary bond, Will, we’ve nurtured and grown it since the first time we saw each other.”

“Oh.”

“It will be completed in our true mating, and we’ll experience...everything that comes with it.”

He closes his eyes. “I’m glad it won’t be her,” he yawns, hugging him, “She didn’t need to be a part of it.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead.

“Molly will not be either,” he whispers, “The death could be anyone, Will.”

He lifts his head. “I know, but,” he sighs as Hannibal touches his cheek, “I want it to be her.”

Hannibal nods. “It will be. I promise.”

Will kisses Hannibal softly before laying on his shoulder, falling asleep faster than he expects. He wakes up to the babies being gone, and finds Hannibal in the pool with them while his Dad stays asleep.

He joins them and the babies come up to them both, looking for attention, and Will smiles as he leans back against him.

“One big happy family,” he laughs, “Is this...how you pictured life with me?”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “No,” he whispers, taking Emma and Dylan into his arms, “It’s even better than I could’ve possibly imagined.”

Will kisses him again, he can’t not, and hums as he feels Hannibal’s grip tighten around him.

He couldn’t have said it better himself.

Chapter 81

Molly calls Will twice the next day, but he doesn't answer.

He knows Hannibal would be mad at him if he did, and in his eagerness he's sure to mess things up.

It's just hard to wait.

Dad is a bit sheepish all morning, barely doing more than mumble, but he's nice to Hannibal so that's something. He plays with the babies, who seem interested in the attention, but they interact more with each other.

"Do you think we'll have to keep them locked up for a long time?" Will asks, frowning as he watches them drop shift from the couch.

"As they grow, they will become more acclimated to their environment. I think perhaps at least a year."

"Oh."

"Though I was thinking perhaps we'd take them outside before the month ends, just to...experience the lake."

Will tenses up as his lip curls. "They could get hurt."

Hannibal touches his arm. "We'd be with them, Mielasis, and assure that doesn't happen."

The idea doesn't exactly fill him with happiness, but they'll need to grow he knows. He sighs.

"I guess."

"We don't have to."

"I mean, normal kids need sunlight and air to grow. I would think they'd need it too."

Hannibal takes his hand. "Yes."

"I just...I don't like thinking of them in the water, surrounded by things that might…"

"They're more deadly than most things in the lake, Will," Hannibal whispers, pulling him closer, "I promise you the only thing reckless enough to attack them is long dead by their parents' hands."

Will digs his nails into Hannibal's hand thinking of Matt. "You're sure?"

"Yes."

"Ok."

His father looks back at them from his spot outside the pool. "We should change the water soon," he says, "It's lookin' past time."

Will sighs. "I can help this time."

Hannibal stands and kisses his cheek. “You can take the children into the bedroom with your father. I’m more than happy to do this on my own.”

“But…”

“Please, Will.”

His Dad picks up two of the babies, who wiggle in annoyance. “You’re sure they won’t bite me?”

Will laughs. “They barely have teeth.”

“I know, but…”

“It’s fine, Dad,” he says, picking up two more while Hannibal takes the others, “You’ll be fine.”

They head into the bedroom together and sit on the bed after Hannibal closes the door. He tries not to look at his Dad’s injury much, though it’s hard not to, and feeds the babies while his Dad gets food for two of the others.

It’s hard to be away from Hannibal now, even just short distances, but he tries not to think about it and focuses on the babies. Emma and Ethan are on top while Dylan and Seb are on the second half. He sighs, touching their heads one by one.

“I never thought I’d become a food dispenser,” he jokes, “But...it’s nice.”

He can see so much more in his other body, even the colors are brighter, and it’s hard not to get lost in things. “Will?”

Will blinks, noticing two of the babies are gone, and he panics until he sees them in his father's arms.

"I...zoned out?"

"A little, Son," he says, sitting on the edge of the bed, "It's alright, I managed."

"By yourself? I'm sorry I just…"

He smiles. "It's fine, I just got a little hurt that's all. I'm a big boy."

Will frowns. "I should've been paying attention."

"Your kids are pretty smart for only being a few days old," he jokes, "They knew who could help change 'em and stuff."

He looks down at Dylan and Seb, who shift when he touches them again, "How long have they been…?"

"I switched 'em a bit ago," he says, "The others were ok with taking a nap, but not these boys."

"Oh."

"Got me a little with their tentacle thingies," he says, laughing as he rubs his wrist, "They're a little more...um...like their Dad I guess."

Will frowns. "I'm sorry, Dad, I…"

“It’s fine.”

“Hannibal’s not done yet?”

“It’s a little bit longer when it’s just him, so no.”

“Oh.”

The awkward quiet makes Will anxious, but he’s saved when Seb starts to wiggle. “Oh!”

He picks him up, patting his little back, and the tiny burps and slurps make him smile.

“Better, buddy?”

Seb looks up at him with red eyes, and Will holds him in the crook of his arm.

“I worried, you know,” His Dad says, making Will look up.

“About what?”

“That you’d suddenly change into something...different...and then be so scared to be seen you’d never find anyone.”

Will frowns. “Oh.”

“But I guess that’s what helped you this time,” he says, touching Seb’s hair, “And your mother’s...stupidity.”

Will sighs. “It wasn’t stupidity,” he mumbles, “She was just...selfish and wanted more than she deserved.”

“Will, she brought you here to force her rich boyfriend into proposing,” Michael mumbles, “She was too stupid to realize he never wanted her at all.”

He blinks back tears. “That’s not…”

“How long did it take you and Hannibal to get together? Two days? Five?”

“A week,” Will says, “It was...about a week.”

“See? I loved Leanne once,” he says, as Will hands over Sebastian, “Or at least I wanted to love her, but she was not…”

“She knew,” Will hisses, as Dylan wiggles in his arms, “She knew something was wrong but Hannibal…”

The door opens and he looks up to see Hannibal rush in looking distressed. “Will? Are you alright?”

“I’m fine, we were just…”

He comes across the room, bypassing his father, and sits right beside Will to touch his face. “I could feel your upset.”

“We were talking about Leanne.”

Hannibal's lip curls and he turns to look at Will's dad. "Why would you even bring *her* up at all?"

"I was just…"

"She is a non-entity now," he hisses, "And has been since the moment I saw your son. We don't need to think about her, not now, and not ever. I don't want you to bring her up to Will, myself, or my children ever again. Do you understand me?"

His father nods. "Yeah, I...I understand," he looks at Will, "I'm sorry, Son. I didn't…"

"It's fine."

"No, it is not," Hannibal interrupts, patting Dylan's back, "The water is done, and I've ordered food to the house as the idea of cooking at the moment is not ideal."

"I'll just…" his father says, standing as Sebastian whimpers in his arms.

"Give him to me," Hannibal growls as he hands over the baby, "And go."

"Dad…"

His Dad leaves, looking upset, and Will wipes away the tears from his face. "You didn't have to yell at him like that."

"You were upset enough that I could feel it in our prebond," Hannibal says, holding both the babies, "That is not normal, and I refuse to let you be upset unnecessarily."

Will sniffles. "I'm not a child, I can...fight my own battles."

“I know, Mielasis,” he says, sighing, “I know. But...you should not have to.”

“Give me Dylan,” Will sighs.

Hannibal hands Dylan over, and Will starts to rock him. He hums, and Hannibal joins in making him smile.

“I like that you want to protect me,” he whispers, his fingers brushing Hannibal's on the bed, “But...my Dad doesn’t know me like you do. He knows the other version of me, and he’s just...he’s trying.”

“I understand, Will, but I will not let you suffer for his callousness.”

Will nods. “I know.”

“We have too much at stake to be blindsided right now.”

He blinks. “What do you mean?”

Hannibal stands and walks Seb to his bassinet before setting him inside. He looks at Will and smiles. “I took a detour after I filled the pool, to...assess the situation.”

Will’s heart beats faster as he comes closer, and Dylan’s little fingers pull on his hair as he starts to close his eyes. “Molly?”

He sits on the bed and pets Dylan’s head. “Yes, I took a swim to the shore by the Foster home. It was quiet, as you’d said, and Molly was outside on her phone alone. I’ve known Ms. Foster in the professional sense for some time, and she’s never seemed so morose.”

“I forgot she said you were her doctor.”

“Yes.”

“How long did you stay?”

“Not long,” he said, taking Dylan from Will, “But no one came, and she didn’t speak on the phone to anyone.”

“She told me no one would talk to her,” Will said, as he sat down again, “And...I really do think she’d let us in just to do something.”

“Will, there are cameras on the property.”

“Oh.”

“And sending a text message would make it easier to connect her to us.”

“So....”

“We’d have to get her out some other way.”

Will frowned as he pulled him closer. “How?”

“I thought perhaps...we’d reach out to Chiyoh.”

He froze.

“Will…”

“After what she’s done to Bev?”

“We don’t yet know she’s done anything.”

He felt his hand shift and watched the claws dig into Hannibal’s side. “We could have Bev…”

“And connect her to this?”

“Chiyoh…”

“She’d understand,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his cheek, “I know you dislike her but...she’d understand.”

“And you’d just have her...what? Lure Molly somewhere? How?”

“I don’t yet know,” he says, nuzzling Will, “But I wanted your permission to speak with her.”

Will blinks back tears. “I don’t...I don’t want you to be alone with her.”

“Of course.”

“We can go find her at the other house,” he says, his voice shaking, “Together.”

“Your father…”

“I’ll ask Bev to come over and help watch the kids.”

Hannibal lifts his head up from Will’s neck and frowns down at him. “You’re upset with me.”

“I know you’re being safe,” he whispers, “But...I just…”

He kisses him softly. “We will speak to Chiyoh about Beverly first,” he says, “And if you dislike her answer, then we’ll think of another way”

Will sighs. “Okay.”

“Do you wish to go now or later?”

He looks out at the group of bassinets, and is loathe to leave the babies alone. “Now,” he sighs, “I’ll go...pump, and then you’re gonna apologize to Dad while I call Bev.”

“Will…”

“He fucked up, Hannibal, ok? But he’s my Dad, and I love him. I want him to be here, and I just...please?”

Hannibal sighs. “As you wish.”

Will kisses him again, teasing a bite to his lip, and shivers when Hannibal touches his cheek.

“We’re gonna get monster married.”

He smiles. “Yes, we are.”

“Let’s go.”

Will gets up with a sigh, and goes to find a shirt while Hannibal leaves. He walks up to the babies and touches every single one of their heads one by one.

“We’ll be back, babies,” he whispers, “Okay?”

They don’t answer, obviously, but he feels an odd sense of calm as he leaves down the hall. Hannibal and his Dad are on the couch as he goes to find the pump, and grabs his phone. It’s a little harder to do at the table, especially with them so close, but he manages as he texts Bev.

You busy?

Me? Never.

Wanna help Dad watch the babies today? Me and Hannibal need some time alone.

****porn music plays****

Lol. Shut up.

You're offering me uninterrupted baby time? I'll be there ASAP.

Thanks Bev, you're a lifesaver.

He finishes up, watching Dad awkwardly pat Hannibal on the shoulder, and smiles as Hannibal comes to sit with him. "We've...come to an agreement. Your father will not mention Leanne again, and I will not sound as if I want to murder him."

Will laughs. "Sounds good to me."

Hannibal takes his hand and kisses it softly. "Did you talk to Beverly?"

"Yeah, she's on her way."

"The food is still coming."

Will suddenly feels like he could eat a shark. "Good, I'm...suddenly very hungry."

Hannibal smiles. "Oh?"

He licks his lips. "Or I could just wait and see what happens tonight."

"I'm certain you can find an appetite later, Mielasis. It's never been hard for you before."

Will stops the pump on one side, and puts the cap on the bottle before he moves to the other.

"Hannibal…"

He kisses Will softly and whispers in his ear. “I cannot wait to taste the blood from her on your tongue.”

Will feels his backside gush and blushes. “Stop, or I’m gonna jump you now.”

“Is that supposed to be a deterrent?”

He nibbles on his neck. “I hate you sometimes.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek again and whispers in his ear. “I love you too, Will. Very, very much.”

He nuzzles his cheek and whispers, “Mine.”

“Always.”

Will can feel a change in the air, so thick he can almost taste it, and his vision reddens as he lifts his head to look into Hannibal’s eyes.

“I can’t wait to monster marry you.”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Soon, Mielasis. Soon.”

Chapter 82

Bev shows up just minutes before the food, and they all have lunch together. Pizza is not Hannibal's favorite but he manages, mostly eating off the toppings, and Will pumps a little more before they're all done.

"Does it hurt? " Bev asks, as he takes it off, "I mean, you don't have to answer."

"Nah," he says, "You get used to it."

"Oh."

"We won't be gone long," he says, not even sure he's telling the truth, "Maybe two hours?"

Bev wiggles her eyebrows. "That long, huh?"

He laughs. "Bev, that…"

She laughs. "Yeah, yeah, I'm sure. Go on!"

Will tosses his plate away in the kitchen, and turns to leave only for Hannibal to block his way. He steps back and Hannibal kisses him softly.

"Are you ready?"

"Yeah," he sighs, "I just...I'm both dreading and looking forward to anything that moves us toward the mating."

“As am I.”

“Do you really think it will be that easy to find her?”

“I think she’s closer than we think.”

Will frowns. “You think she’s been watching us?”

“No,” he shakes his head, touching Will’s cheek, “But I think she can hear us anyway no matter where we go.”

“So you don’t think we have to go to the other house?”

“Perhaps not, no,” Hannibal says, “But if you’d rather go there that’s fine.”

“I just want to get this over with,” he mumbles, taking Hannibal’s hand, “Don’t you?”

Hannibal kisses his hand and smiles. “Very much so, yes.”

“Then let’s get out of here.”

Will pulls Hannibal out of the kitchen, stopping by Bev and his Dad.

“We’re gonna go.”

“Okay! Have fun,” Bev says, wiggling her eyebrows.

Will blushes.

He turns to his Father who eyes them both sadly. “Have a...goodbye, Son.”

He frowns. “Dad…”

“Will, let’s go.”

Will lets Hannibal get him outside and sighs, looking back at the house. “We really need to talk to him again.”

“He and I have come to an agreement, Will. It’s fine.”

“Is it? He looked pretty upset to me.”

“Will, it’s fine.”

“No, I really don’t think it is.”

“I will...discuss things with him again when we return. If that will make you happy.”

“Thank you.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “You’re welcome. Come now.”

They get into Hannibal’s car together, Will settling against him as they pull out of the driveway, and by the time they’re on the road all he can think about is what’s coming.

“How are you so sure Chiyoh will be that easy to get a hold of?”

“She found us before,” Hannibal says, squeezing his hand, “I’m certain she can find us again.”

“We told her to go away.”

“Yes, but we’re the only creatures like her she’s ever seen other than her own family. I know once I found you it was...difficult...to do anything but try to bring you to me.”

Will frowns. “So you were obsessed with bringing me to you when you smelled me on *her* , but you don’t think Chiyoh could get obsessed with us?”

“Will…”

“I’m just saying, Hannibal, it’s not exactly making me want to get in touch with her.”

“I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“I know, I just…”

He squeezes Will’s hand again. “We will talk with her about Beverly, see her answer, and if it’s sufficient...we will continue. If not, we’ll think about other avenues of dealing with her.”

Will frowns. “You mean…”

“I will do anything to protect my family, Will, no matter what the cost.”

He lets out a breath. “Okay.”

The rest of the drive is quiet, tense, and when they pull up to the house Will can’t stop thinking about what’s to come. They take off their clothes and shift before getting into the water, moving close to one another. “Now what?”

“I suppose, we can call for her?”

“How?”

“Hum?”

Will tenses. “That’s ours, not hers.”

“I suppose…”

He pulls them under the water and yells loudly, knowing she’ll hear if she’s nearby, and when they come up to the surface Hannibal kisses him. “Or that?” he asks, smiling.

“Or that,” Hannibal says, “Would you like to go for a swim?”

Will nuzzles their fins against one another and Hannibal growls. “Hmm…”

“Will…”

He nips at Hannibal’s neck. “We can just…”

A splash makes them tense up, and Will turns to see Chiyoh lingering off away. She's not shifted, but still the scent of her nearby unmated makes his hackles rise.

"You heard."

"It was hard not to," she says, "I thought you didn't want me near."

"We didn't," Hannibal says, "But...it's come to our attention that you're involved with someone close to us."

Chiyoh frowns. "Involved?"

"Beverly Katz," Will hisses, "She says you're…"

Her eyes widen. "Bevvy? I didn't...she's...one of your people?"

"No, no," Hannibal says, shaking his head, "She's human, but close to us. You weren't aware of this?"

"No. We met online a few weeks ago, and...I like her very much. Just seeing her is...it...it pains me to think of what she'll do when I tell her my secret. I don't want to lose her."

Will frowns. "You really didn't know who she was when you started talking to her?"

"No, I promise you. I enjoy Bevvy, she...there are times when I think she's my person. It's much too soon to tell her that, I know."

Will shakes his head. "It's not...I mean...she likes you too."

“You’ve spoken to her about me?”

“A little, not...about you being...like us.”

“I see.”

“She’s not the only reason we’re here.”

Chiyoh frowns. “May I come closer?”

Hannibal puts his hand on Will’s shoulder. “I’m not certain…”

“Yes,” Will says, “You...can come.”

Chiyoh moves closer, still wary, and is only a foot or so away when she stops. “What did you want from me, other than...asking about Beverly?”

They look at each other.

“We’re...very close to mating.”

She nods. “I thought it strange you were unmated if you were so...defensive...of one another.”

Will glares at her. “It’s not as if it’s by choice.”

“Will…”

“I didn’t mean it that way,” she says, frowning, “I just...I mean...my mother taught me much about the ways and...I’m not certain yours are the same as ours but…”

“A proper mating includes a sacrifice,” Hannibal says, shifting back, “And we believe we’ve...chosen ours.”

Chiyoh nods. “Yes, it’s the same for me. It’s a very...dark...thing for some. I would never ask it of Beverly, as she’s human, but...I’m certain you’re not here to ask my thoughts.”

“No. We have chosen our sacrifice and need to...lure them away.”

She cocks her head to the side. “And you want my help.”

“Yeah,” Will mumbles.

“You don’t yet trust me but want my help in something so important?”

“I mean, let’s not…”

Chiyoh smiles. “I am honored.”

Hannibal smiles back. “She’s human, and she lives nearer to our other home. It’s not far, but...we just need...something to bring her away from prying eyes.”

She shifts, and Will’s teeth ache watching her in her other form.

“I could attempt to lure her out into the water.”

“How?”

Chiyoh touches her mouth. “I could sing for her.”

He blinks. “Sing?”

“It’s normally part of the mating dance,” she says, making him look at Hannibal, “To sing for your partner. My voice is loud enough it can be heard far away, and I can try to lure her out into the water.”

Will moves closer to Hannibal. “When?”

“Whenever you need.”

“You’re just...fine with this?”

She nods. “I want...I’d like to...gain...your trust. If it’s possible.”

Will bites his lip. “I’m not exactly sure if that *is* possible.”

Chiyoh shifts back, frowning, and nods. “I know, but...I’d like to try. If this is the first step in doing so, then it will be worth it.”

Will looks at Hannibal. “So?”

“It’s up to you, Mielasis,” he says, putting hand on Will’s shoulder, “What do you think?”

His teeth ache as he thinks for a minute, and when he looks out at the water it almost sings to him.

“Can we do it tonight?”

“Yes.”

“We can take you there,” Hannibal says, “Now if it’s alright.”

“I’m ready.”

The three of them take off under the water fast, Will eager to get there first, and when they come up near Molly’s house they barely resurface. He can’t see anyone outside, but judging by how sad Molly’s been he’s sure she’s there.

“She goes outside a lot,” he says, “I’m sure…”

Chiyoh starts to sing loudly, the sound ringing in his ears, and Will hisses moving to shield Hannibal. The sound makes him almost irrationally angry, and he digs his nails into Hannibal’s arm as she continues.

“Stop, stop her I can’t…”

“Chiyoh, it’s…”

Molly comes outside suddenly and Will goes under, hoping to dull the sound. He digs his nails into Hannibal from behind, holding him close, and Chiyoh stops. The aftermath still grates on his nerves.

Will?

I'm fine.

He comes up again, shaking, and Chiyoh has moved away from them. "I apologize, I didn't know it would affect you."

Will hisses at her. "Didn't you?"

"No, I apologize. I didn't...I'm sorry."

Hannibal's arm comes around him. "She'll see us if we stay here. Let's go."

"Yes."

They take off again, Will dragging Hannibal so close it's almost comical, and when they resurface again they're at the other house. He's exhausted, angry, upset, and just overall rattled from the whole thing but he doesn't move an inch from Hannibal.

"I apologize again," she says, "If you don't want me to…"

"No," Will mumbles, "We do. I'm just...I'll stay away, or...I dunno."

"We'll figure something out," Hannibal says, "Thank you, Chiyoh."

She nods. "I will be here just after dark."

“Thank you.”

Will doesn’t say a word as she leaves, and once she’s gone he’s practically shaking with relief.

“Will?”

“Sorry,” he mumbles, “I just...god it felt like...like…”

“Like she was trying to lure me away.”

Will frowns. “Yeah.”

“That’s not possible, Mielasis,” he whispers, kissing Will’s forehead, “Remember that.”

“I know, I just…”

“We’re doing this for us, Will, and there is no one else for either of us. We’re meant for each other.”

He smiles. “I know.”

They head for the house but don’t get redressed. Will calls Bev as they get inside, and she picks up on the first ring.

“Wow, that was fast.”

He laughs. *“Shut up.”*

“You on your way?”

He looks at Hannibal, fully naked, and shakes his head. *“Do you think you can stay longer?”*

“How much longer?”

“Till after dark? I’ll call when we’re headed back.”

“Yeah sure, that’s fine. And hey, if you want to stay out all night that’s ok too. We’ve got more than enough milk, and the kids are being angels. Though your Dad is still a little ooky about tentacles.”

He laughs. *“Thanks Bev. You’re a life saver.”*

“Tell Hannibal he better thank me too.”

Will sighs as Hannibal comes up to hug him from behind, leaning against him. *“He will* .”

He ends the call, putting the phone down, and Hannibal kisses his neck. “She said yes.”

“Yeah,” he sighs, “It’s...it’s happening.”

“Will…”

“Monster married,” he growls, “You and me.”

“Yes.”

“We’ll have to think of an alibi,” Will says, as Hannibal nibbles at his neck, “If she disappears the same night we’re out it’ll look suspicious.”

Hannibal turns him around. “I suppose...we may have to start thinking of options.”

Will steps in closer. “Now?”

“Now I believe we should...refrain...from doing more?”

His face falls. “What? We just…”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “We’re going to bond tonight, Will, and...I believe...it will be better if we wait. The anticipation will amp up the intensity.”

“Is this like when you told me we had to wait to have sex when we were sneaking around? Are you gonna secretly knock me up again?”

He smiles. “No, I just…”

Will sighs. “We hardly get any time alone, Hannibal.”

“I know, Mielasis, I know.”

He steps away. “What are we gonna do then? Just sit here?”

Hannibal frowns. “Will…’

“I know I’m being a baby, I just…”

He comes up and hugs Will again, the feeling of skin to skin making Will whimper.

“It will be worth the wait, Will. I promise.”

“I know, I just…”

“For now, we can think of our alibi.”

Will smiles back at him. “Get dressed then, because if we’re gonna be here thinking of cover stories naked I won’t be able to stop myself from jumping you.”

Hannibal smiles. “Okay.”

He watches him go, and redresses in his own clothes before sitting down at the table.

This house still feels like home to him, and he sighs thinking he might never get to live here. Hannibal returns completely dressed carrying a pen and paper. “Ready?”

Will smiles as he sits down. “More than ready.

They hold hands tightly and Will can almost smell Molly’s blood in the air.

It’s happening tonight.

He can feel it.

Nothing is gonna stand in their way.

Chapter 83

The wait until dark is nothing short of torture for Will.

Especially in this house.

It's much harder to ignore Hannibal here, or even get distracted from his want of him, and as the hours go by Hannibal seems to be enjoying the attention.

"You're killing me," Will mumbles, staring as they sit across from one another.

"It's not long now."

"Yes, it is," Will mumbles, "I feel like...my skin is itchy."

"Like you can't wait to drop your shift."

"Yeah."

"You're anticipating, Will, it's not uncommon and it'll go away once you change."

"That doesn't matter," Will mumbles, "I'll still feel it until then."

"I'm sorry."

"I know, I just...I feel like it's been so long."

Hannibal moves to take his hand but stops, resting it just shy of touching. “It’s better to do this under cover of darkness.”

“I know,” Will mumbles, getting up, “I’m just impatient. I’m gonna just go looking around the house a little.”

“You won’t go outside alone?”

Will freezes up, shaking his head. “I’m not stupid enough to do that again.”

“I didn’t mean…”

He sighs. “I know. Sorry I’m just...a little sensitive. Come get me when she gets here.”

Will leaves the table, trying not to get upset, and walks down the hallway. The pictures are still there, drawings of Hannibal’s life before him, and he touches every single one with both his hands. This house still feels like theirs, even if they’re not in it.

“Will?”

He doesn’t look at him. “Sorry I’m being such a baby.”

“You’re not.”

“Yeah,” he laughs, “I am. I just...I’m so ready.”

“I know.”

“And if things don’t go well tonight, I don’t know what I’ll do.”

“Will…”

“We’ll keep this between us and her,” he mumbles, “And it’ll be worth it. I know.”

Hannibal comes closer now, reaching out to touch his shoulder, and Will leans into him. His scent does nothing but make Will more desperate but he clings, resisting the urge to push for more.

He kisses Will’s forehead. “The sun is going down, Mielasis. It’s not long now.”

Will smiles. “I know, I just,” he turns his head to nuzzle Hannibal’s cheek, “I feel so…”

“Will…”

He steps away, trembling with need, and shakes his head. “I’m gonna get away just...tell me when it’s time.”

“Of course.”

Will walks into the next bedroom, shutting the door, and turns on the light before he sits on the bed. It’s a smaller room, but the bed is just as nice, and he lays back to stare up at the ceiling.

He’s going to kill someone today.

Does she deserve it?

No.

But he knows he's going to do it anyway.

His teeth feel heavy in his mouth, and Will reaches up to touch them. The sharp points don't break his skin, but he knows if he pushes down they will. He bites just enough and the taste of blood makes him hungrier.

"Fuck," he whispers, vision suddenly red, "This…"

The sun is nearly down through the windows and he feels so hot he's almost sure something is wrong with him.

Why do they have to wait so long?

Will curls up, resisting the urge to drop shift, and the building tension makes the minutes drag by as tears fill his eyes.

Maybe she's not coming. Maybe Chiyoh is going to go tell Bev he and Hannibal are going to kill someone and ruin everything he's ever---

The knock makes him jump up, and Hannibal steps inside.

"She's swimming there now," Hannibal says, "It should not be long."

Will frowns. "I thought we were…"

“I decided that it would be best if she...incapacitates Molly and brings her to another location where we can retrieve her.”

He lets out a breath. “And then...in the water?”

“Yes,” Hannibal whispers, “In the water. The body will be like the others, mistaken for a wild animal attack. We will not leave much of her for identification, so perhaps she will not be found much at all.”

Will growls, vision fully red now, and Hannibal kisses him. “The cave,” he whispers, “We can...do it in the cave.”

“The cave is much closer to the Foster residence and the house. If someone hears…”

“It’s underwater, Hannibal, no one will hear but us.”

Hannibal presses their foreheads together.

“Will…”

“It was the first place I saw your other face,” Will whispers, blinking back tears, “And we’ve hardly been back there since he...ruined it. I want it to be ours again. I want...I want that to be the first place we take the babies when they’re old enough. I want…”

Hannibal kisses him hard, biting Will’s lip, and he digs his claws into Hannibal’s back as they fall onto the bed. He needs this, needs him, and Hannibal growls when Will pushes him off.

“You said...we had to wait.”

“Yes, I...I apologize, I just...yes, Will. We’ll take her to the cave. I will inform Chiyoh.”

Will smiles, taking his hand. “Let’s go.”

They rush out of the bedroom and down the hall, losing pieces of clothing as they go. Will is already shifted before they hit the water, and he races off so excited he can hardly stand it.

They’re going to be monster married.

It’s really happening.

It takes longer than he expects to get to the cave, the lack of light making it a lot harder, but they find Chiyoh just outside in the area he’s known for so long. She smiles when they appear, happier than he’s seen her be since he’s known her, and the body in her arms makes Will’s heart beat wildly in his chest.

“She put up very little fight,” she says, handing her to Hannibal, “And I...I promise I will not watch you go.”

Will grabs her arm, and she looks surprised. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. I...I only hope...if I need the same courtesy in the future you’d help me as well.”

He nods. “We would.”

Chiyoh takes off in a rush under the water, leaving them alone, and he looks at Hannibal who’s already dropped shift fully.

“Will…”

“Can she make it long under?”

“She may sputter and wake because of it, but she’ll be fine.”

Will looks at Molly, completely passed out, and tries to feel remorse for this but can’t seem to find any. “I’ll meet you at the opening and take her.”

“Yes.”

He goes under and through the entrance, waiting for Hannibal to follow, and when he hands Molly over Will pulls her through. She’s not heavy, but when she starts to sputter he pulls them both up and out fast.

Molly is coughing just as Hannibal resurfaces, still out of it, and Hannibal puts both his hands on Will’s.

“Are you ready, Mielasis?”

Will looks at her. “I...I want to…”

“It would be more humane to take her now, before she’s…”

Molly moans, blinking her eyes open, and her scream as she sees them both makes Will’s teeth rattle. “What the fuck? WHAT THE FUCK? HELP! SOMEBODY!”

He doesn’t know what makes him do it.

Pettiness?

Anger?

But he shifts back with ease, making her eyes widen, and when she looks at Hannibal Will knows he's done the same. "What? W...Will? Doctor Lecter?"

"Hello Molly," Hannibal says, "I'm sure you're quite confused."

"What are you? Are...are you some sort of shapeshifting monsters? Are you just pretending to look like people I know because…"

Will rushes forward, scaring her, and grabs her arms hard. He digs his claws in, making her whimper, and the hiss he lets out echoes off the walls. "I'm fixing a mistake," he whispers, "You...you have no idea what a gift you're about to give us."

"What are you…"

Hannibal comes up on the other side, taking Will's hand away, and goes behind her just as he turns Molly to Will. "Will…"

Will feels a tear fall down his cheek. "I wish I could say I'm sorry," he whispers, his vision turning red, "But...I'm not."

He runs his claw across her chest, ripping the sweater she has on, and she screams as he digs in again just as Hannibal rips it off completely. Her chest drips blood as they dig at her, flesh tearing, and when they both touch her heart at the same time Will lets out a loud yell that echoes off the walls. Hannibal grabs the body, tossing it to the rocks, and they both bite into her heart together as he lifts Will up into his arms. Will can barely see through his tears, the taste of flesh in his mouth only making him hotter, and when Hannibal thrusts into him he bites down again on the heart between them. He can hardly breathe, licking at Hannibal's mouth as he lets out a loud moan, and when Hannibal kisses him he bites down hard on Will's tongue. Will does the same, the taste of their mixed blood together making him gush

wet from his backside, and when Hannibal presses him against the rock wall his fin digs in but he doesn't care. Hannibal's thrusts are hard, deep reminders of who he belongs to, and when Hannibal pulls back to bite into his neck his voice breaks as he hums their song.

He can feel it, the bond forming, and he bites down into Hannibal's neck to finish as tears fall down his face.

I love you, Will.

I love you, Hannibal.

Every thrust feels like it belongs to them both, the deep need between them a raging inferno, and when he comes Will screams so loud he's sure the whole world hears. Hannibal comes with him, spilling hard, and fills him up so deep he feels like he can taste him on his tongue.

Will falls forward, panting, eyes heavy as he struggles not to pass out.

"Fuck," he whimpers, "Fuck...fuck…"

Hannibal licks at his neck, humming, and Will's glad his mate is so strong because one move and he'll sink underwater.

We are one.

Will can feel him, deep inside, and knows if anything happens Hannibal now could really find him anywhere.

"We're never…gonna be...apart again."

Hannibal lifts his head, smiles, and shifts back to the face Will knew him first. His mouth is covered in blood, and he's never looked so handsome.

"Never."

"Hannibal…"

Hannibal puts both hands on Will's face, such a familiar touch, and presses their foreheads together.

"My Will," he whispers, "My...everything."

Will whimpers, hugging him tight, and sees Molly's discarded body lying half in the water across the cave.

"She's still...recognizable."

"Yes," Hannibal whispers, "I thought perhaps we'd tear her to shreds getting to the heart but in our haste we just got to the most important part."

Will laughs.

"I shouldn't be laughing but...I'm just…" he laughs, smiling at Hannibal, "I'm so happy."

"As am I, Will, I...I love you very much."

"I love you too."

They kiss again, the taste of blood still between them, and Will knows they can't stay but he takes what he can get. Hannibal sets him down soon after and he sighs as he pulls out of him. "We should...cleanse ourselves."

"We can do that at home."

"I suppose so."

"We have to get rid of her."

"I know. If you'd like I can do everything and you can just…"

Will reaches out to take his hands, squeezing. "We're monster married now, Hannibal, we do this together."

Hannibal smiles. "Ok."

It isn't hard to tear up the body.

Will thought it would be, he thought everything would be, but he feels nothing as they make her unrecognizable as a person. Molly was a means to an end, nothing, and while he knows their trail will be gone by morning he still worries someone will find the cave.

No one will find it, Will. Keep going.

They leave her near the Hobbs farm, hoping to throw the police off, and head back to the other house where they shower. Hannibal fucks him again up against the wall, slowly this time, and Will finds even when he comes now he knows Hannibal can feel it too.

They really are one.

The drive back is later than they expected, but when they pull in Bev is sound asleep with three babies on her chest. The babies wake up as soon as they come inside, crying, and Bev shoots up from the couch.

“Oh! It’s you. I thought I dropped one.”

Will smiles. “Nope. Sorry we took so long.”

“It’s ok,” she says, smiling, “We had a blast. Your dad passed out I think somewhere. The other two were sound asleep. Little angels….or so they were.”

Will picks up Dylan, Liam, and Sebastian, all who seem eager to nurse, and pulls Bev into a hug.

“You need a ride home or are you gonna stay?”

“Can I stay?”

“Of course,” Hannibal says, holding Emma, Ethan, and Beverly, “Will’s bedroom is unoccupied. We...tend to sleep in the water or on the couch.”

Bev grins. “Okay. I’ll stay. You owe me a big breakfast tomorrow.”

Will smiles. “Deal.”

She leaves them, and Will takes off everything to shift as Hannibal lays every baby on him. He sighs when they start to suckle, and Hannibal kisses him softly.

“Mine,” he whispers. “All mine.”

Will smiles. “I always have been.”

“And always will be.”

He’s never been happier.

They’re monster married.

Finally.

Chapter 84

There's one aspect of being monster married that Will doesn't expect.

He feels everything Hannibal does, and he's sure the reverse must be the same. Hannibal wakes randomly even before the children, and it pulls Will out of sleep immediately. Hannibal is staring down at Sebastian's bassinet when he finds him.

"Hannibal?"

"Go to sleep, Will."

"I can't," he mumbles, rubbing his eyes as he sits up, "Not if you're awake. What's wrong?"

"Nothing, I just…had a dream."

Will frowns. "About the babies?"

"Yes, it's fine, I just…needed to see them."

He gets up off the couch and comes up behind him, hugging Hannibal tightly. "What happened?"

"I'm surprised you didn't feel my distress."

"Maybe that's what woke me," Will whispers, "I'm not used to it yet, remember?"

He sighs. "I dreamt that I woke and you were all gone. I was alone again."

Will kisses his cheek. “We’re here, ok?”

“I know, Mielasis, I just…it was a strong dream.”

Will turns Hannibal around and presses himself against him. “You can feel me, right? Like I can feel you?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, touching Will’s face with both hands, “Which is why I got up without checking you. You’re a part of me now, Will, and yes we have our bond with the children but it’s faded now that they’ve been hatched. I’m sorry if I’ve upset you, but…”

Will kisses him softly. “You didn’t, I just…we’re not going anywhere.”

Hannibal sighs. “I know, Will. I know.”

They head back to bed, Will wrapping his arms around Hannibal as Hannibal holds him tight. Every breath they take feels as if they’re one, and Will can’t help but tear up at how whole he feels.

“It’s like we’re…conjoined.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “It’s because we are, Will. Does that frighten you?”

“Why would it?” he laughs, nuzzling Hannibal’s chest, “I’ve wanted to be monster married to you for so long and now it’s just…so right.”

“Yes, it most certainly is.”

It’s easy to fall asleep then, though the kids wake them not long after, and together they change diapers and share feeding duties. Will is exhausted when they’re woken by Bev and his Dad trying not to make noise.

“They’re not very good at being quiet,” Hannibal mumbles, nuzzling Will’s neck.

“No,” he groans, “We need to get a back door so they can’t bother us while we’re sleeping like this.”

“Indeed.”

Will gets up first, stretching, and throws off the sheets. He puts on his robe, careful not to wake the babies who seem to not care about the noise, and goes right to the kitchen. Bev and his dad are having toast and drinking orange juice. They both look apologetic when he walks between them to get the juice.

“Couldn’t wait for that big breakfast?” he yawns, pouring himself a glass.

“Sorry,” Bev mumbles, chewing with her mouth full, “I’m not usually a morning person but I crashed right away last night. Your kids were angels but they took a lot out of me.”

He smiles. “It’s fine.”

Hannibal comes in after, going right for the refrigerator where he starts pulling out food to cook.

“Oh, you don’t have to, I was just—”

Will’s dad pokes her. “Don’t stop him! He’s good at it, let him. They’re new parents, they're used to losing sleep.”

Will smiles at his Dad, and is glad when his Dad seems ok again. He doesn't want him to feel bad about bringing up Leanne. She's gone, but Will knows there are times when she'll worm her way back into his life.

She was, after all, his mother.

"We're used to it," he mumbles, coming up to Hannibal to kiss him, "But we don't exactly like that part of it."

Hannibal smiles. "There are times when the loss of sleep can be positive, Mielasis….and I'm sure your father knows exactly what I mean."

His dad groans. "That's it, I'm gonna go check on the grandkids. You know I don't want to think about all that!"

Will giggles when his father leaves, and Bev laughs leaning against the counter.

"I hope you're proud of yourself."

He can feel Hannibal's satisfaction through their bond as he smiles at her. "I most certainly am."

Bev chuckles. "So…is that all you guys did last night? A little swim and tickle?"

Will blushes. "Bev…"

"Hey, you don't have to answer! I'm just curious."

Will looks at Hannibal.

I want to tell her but I'll just leave some things out. Ok?

That's fine, Will. Even if you do decide to tell her everything, that's fine as well.

Will kisses his cheek and looks at Bev.

"What?" she asks, "Am I missing something?"

"We sort of…got monster married last night."

She blinks. "Monster married?"

Will nods. "It's a whole bonding thing, it's..intense…but I think worth it. I…I'm really happy and I know Hannibal is too."

"Extremely," Hannibal says, taking Will's hand to kiss it, "I've never been happier."

"That's amazing!" she yells, coming up to hug him, "I…"

"Shh," Will sighs, "I'm not sure I'm ready to tell Dad yet."

She frowns. "Oh. I mean, are you gonna get people married too sometime?"

Will shrugs, leaning into Hannibal. "If we want to, I guess, but I don't feel like we have to."

“We may have to for the children,” Hannibal says, making Will frown.

“What?”

“Legitimacy, Will,” he says, “I’ve already commissioned their birth certificates and listed you as their father without a mother. I myself can’t be listed as a parent.”

Will blinks. “Wait…what?”

Bev sighs. “That sucks.”

Hannibal smiles. “It’s fine.”

Will feels an odd ache in his chest. “No, it’s not! You’re their father!”

“Um,” Bev mumbles, “I’m just gonna…go. Call me when breakfast is done, or burnt. Whichever.”

Hannibal flips the eggs with a sigh. “Will…”

“Why didn’t you tell me about this?”

“Because I knew you’d get upset.”

“Of course I’m upset! You’re their dad! You can’t just…fuck!”

He feels tears fill his eyes as Hannibal turns off the stove, and pulls him close.

"We have to live in their world, Will," he whispers, touching Will's cheek, "That's just how it is."

"So now I'm the unwed teenage father and you're what…their stepdad?"

"Until you're of age, I'm just the person you're staying with," Hannibal says, "And that's all."

"But…"

"Will," he whispers, kissing him softly, "I don't care. We know who our children are, and that's all that matters."

He feels a tear fall down his cheek. "I know, but…it's not fair."

"Much about their world isn't fair, Mielasis, but that's just how it has to be. When we finally are able to acknowledge our love and get married I will formally adopt them."

He feels an ache in his chest. "Okay."

"Will, do not let this bother you. Please. I knew that this would happen for a very long time."

Will leans against him and sighs. "You should've told me."

"I didn't want to ruin this time for you, Will. I'm sorry."

"It's fine. Can I watch you cook?"

Hannibal smiles. “Of course.”

“Lift me up?”

He lifts Will with ease and puts him on the counter, and for the next half hour Will watches him work. The whole thing is rather sensual, every movement filled with grace, and by the time he’s done Will’s already wet from the whole ordeal.

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal’s eyes are red when he turns off the heat, plating everyone’s food, and then comes up to give Will a taste with his fingers. Will eats with a sigh, his vision red, and just as he goes to kiss him the kitchen door opens.

“We’re starving out here!” his dad says, grabbing two plates, “If you’re gonna be doin’ that stuff, can’t you go in the bedroom?”

Will grins, blushing. “Dad…”

“I know you’re in love, alright? It’s just…you’re still my kid. I’m not exactly thrilled to know what’s going on all the time.”

Hannibal smiles and kisses Will’s cheek, turning to grin at his Dad. “I’ll try to keep him quiet, but…it might prove difficult.”

“Oh god, I’m gonna throw up just...oh god…”

He runs out of the kitchen and Hannibal drops down, opening Will’s robe, and begins to lick at his hole hungrily. Will can taste himself on his tongue while also feeling every touch,

making this so intense he has tears in his eyes. His growls make Will whimper, covering his mouth, and he's aching so much he's sure he's going to fall to pieces any minute.

Will…

Don't stop, don't you fucking stop.

Hannibal gently lays him down on the counter the long way, lifting his hips, and the excited licking continues until Will's biting his fingers to keep from crying out. He can feel his orgasm near, the weight of it already so intense, and every taste of his own slick makes him want more.

It's so much, it's…oh god please…

Hannibal grabs his cock, stroking, and Will comes with such force when Hannibal follows he's dizzy with pleasure. He drops his hand, moaning, and Hannibal pulls back to smile with razor sharp teeth.

"Will…"

He sits up fast, grabbing him, and smashes their mouths together as he hears a plate fall to the floor. Hannibal picks him up, growling, and they kiss until they're breathless.

Will smiles. "It's always gonna be like that, then?"

"From now on, yes."

"Fuck, it's...so much."

“And there’s plenty more to come.”

He laughs. “Dad’s gonna move out even before we get the chance to fix the other house.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised.”

Will kisses him again, and then looks at the floor. One of the plates fell and the food is all over.

“Oops.”

“You can have mine.”

“But…”

He lifts his hand and licks the remains of Will’s passion, eyes dancing. “I’ve got plenty to eat.”

Will blushes. “Hannibal…”

“Or we could share?”

“Yeah, that’s…yeah.”

They do just that, eating piece by piece back and forth until it’s all gone. Will is loathe to leave but the sound of his babies crying makes him jump down fast. “I gotta…”

“I’ll be right there, Will. I’m going to clean this up.”

“Ok.”

Will runs from the kitchen, holding his robe together, and Bev is already holding Emma and Ethan when he comes over. “Thank you.”

“The others are a little wiggly, but I think they’re ok for now. You,” she whispers, grinning, “Dirty boy.”

He blushes and sits down, looking around. “Shut up, where’s…where did Dad go?”

“To gouge out his eardrums?”

Will laughs. “Oh.”

“Is it always like that or…I mean…is it because of…”

“Both?”

“Whoa.”

Will opens his robe and puts the two babies to his chest, letting them latch on. “Do you think you’d ever want…something like that?”

Bev sits down beside him, frowning. “Like that? A ride or die type thing? I dunno. I mean, I like Chiyoh a lot more than I did Abby.”

Will looks down at the babies, and hates that he can’t tell her about Chiyoh. He knows it’s not his place, but it feels wrong to keep it from her. “You barely know her though.”

“I’ve met her now,” Bev says, “And I know I know her more than I did Abby. Abby was a crush who I was excited to get to kiss, Chiyoh is…someone I can see as my person. Maybe.”

“That’s good, I guess.”

“I want you guys to meet her, but I know you’ve got this whole thing with the kids and strangers might not mix well with it.”

“Yeah.”

They’re quiet, a bit too quiet, and Will burps both Emma and Ethan just as more babies start to cry.

“Don’t get up! Super Auntie is here!”

He laughs just as he feels Hannibal nearby.

Are you alright?

Yeah, I’m good.

I heard her speak of Chiyoh.

Yeah.

I’m sorry you have to keep this from her, Will.

I know.

Bev helps trade off a few of the babies until Hannibal makes himself known. “There’s other dad! You’re slacking there, Hannibal.”

“My apologies,” Hannibal says, taking Dylan from her, “I was cleaning up the…mess.”

Bev laughs. “Ohhh. Well I can’t argue about that. Will’s dad would never enter the kitchen again if you didn’t.”

“Pity.”

She giggles.

Bev is a lifesaver as they finish with the kids, and even puts them in the pool after they’ve all ate to watch them swim.

“They’re little miracles,” she sighs, smiling, “I love them so much.”

Will smiles. “They love you too.”

She grins. “They’re like…two seconds old and I’m not the food machine.”

“They do,” Will says, hugging her as Hannibal sits down beside him, “I know they do.”

“Well, I mean…who doesn’t?”

The babies all end up swimming till lunch, and then there's more diaper changes before more feedings. Bev leaves right after, though they offer to buy a pizza for lunch, but she declines.

"I got a date online in an hour," she grins, winking, "I gotta get pretty."

She hugs Will tight and he clings to her. "Have fun."

"Oh I will."

He watches her go and sighs as the car pulls away.

"Chiyoh has to tell her sometime," he mumbles, "And I know she's gonna hate me when that happens."

"Perhaps she'll understand."

"I hope so."

Hannibal comes up behind him and hugs him tightly. "Will."

He leans back against him. "After what happened with Abby, she's…I mean…she's gotta tell her soon. It'll hurt more if she doesn't."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "Perhaps we should talk to Chiyoh about this."

Will closes his eyes. "Yeah, I think we have to. Soon. I just hope it doesn't ruin everything."

“It won’t, Will. Beverly loves you.”

He lifts his head up and blinks back tears as he looks at Hannibal. “I just…”

Hannibal kisses him quiet, leading him back toward the pool where they both get inside to swim with the babies. Will doesn’t want to think about what might happen, at least not yet, and he feels so much better in the water.

He lays down, the babies coming closer, and Hannibal pulls him to lay on his shoulder.

Everything will be ok, Will.

I hope so.

Chapter 85

The rest of the afternoon is almost too quiet.

There's so little to worry about now, other than Bev and Chiyoh, and Will wonders when the other shoe will drop.

They've never been this safe before, and it feels oddly wrong somehow.

Hannibal's touchy with him most of the day, obviously sensing his troubles, but he doesn't bother him. His father, on the other hand, can't help himself. He finishes changing all six of the babies' diapers, and they're again in the water but he doesn't join them.

Will just watches.

It makes him so happy to see them so free with their shifting, and he can't help but get tears in his eyes.

"Son?"

He looks up to see his Dad frowning in the doorway.

"Yeah?"

"You alright?"

Will wipes his eyes, sniffling. "Yeah, I'm ok."

“You look down.”

“No, I just—”

“Son, I raised you for sixteen years. I know when you’re upset.”

Will sighs. “I’m not upset.”

“Hannibal came to ask me what he can get you for a gift, and I asked him why but he wouldn’t tell me. I thought the two of you had some kinda mind meld thing goin’ on?”

Will blinks. “What?”

“You pause and look at each other sometimes, Kid. It’s not hard to figure out.”

He blushes. “Oh, we didn’t…I guess that’s probably easy to spot.”

His Dad smiles and sits down beside him. “A little.”

Will sighs. “I just…it feels weird to be safe like this.”

“Safe?”

“No one out there trying to get us, I mean. There was Matt, and there was *her* …”

And the Hobbs’...

Will thinks the last part, knowing his Dad wouldn't approve, and the frown he gets only cements that.

"And the cops."

"The cops barely cared about her," Will mumbles, putting his hand in the water, "Just like she barely cared about anyone else."

"True."

"I just…I feel like something bad has to happen. Right?"

His Dad touches his shoulder and he looks at him. "Or you could just be happy, Son. You ever think of that?"

Will smiles. "No," he says, his voice shaking, "But I guess I should've huh?"

"Will…"

He looks over his father's shoulder and sees Hannibal in the kitchen doorway frowning.

We're ok.

You're certain?

Yeah. I love you.

I love you too.

Will's father looks back just as Hannibal closes the door. "He tell ya the same?"

"No, but…he doesn't have to, I just can't help but worry."

"You've only got my little grandmonsters to worry about, that's all."

Will smiles and looks at the babies all swimming. "I guess so."

He knows it's not true, there's still Bev and the secret to share, but he can't tell his Dad.

There's so much he can't tell his Dad.

"I love you, Dad."

His father pulls him into a hug. "I love you too, Son."

Will feels tears well up in his eyes and he clutches him hard. "Hannibal and I…we…we got monster married."

His father stiffens and pulls back. "What?"

"It's this thing," Will says, sniffling, "It's a sea creature thing. I can't really explain it without grossing you out."

"You did this without asking me?"

"Dad…"

“You’re *sixteen,* Will. Don’t I get a say in the rest of your life?”

Will glares. “You didn’t even let *me* get a say in the first sixteen years of my life, Dad? How is it fair that you would be able to get a say in the rest of it?”

His father rears back. “That’s not fair, Will.”

He hisses, dropping shift, and the babies all start to cry.

“What’s going on in here?”

His father turns around to poke Hannibal in the chest. “YOU! You just up and marry my kid in some weird monster ceremony? You didn’t even ask me!”

“Why would I ask you?”

Will climbs into the pool to pick up the babies, shushing them, “I’m sorry, sweetie,” he whispers, pulling them close, “I’m sorry.”

“...AND NOW HIS ENTIRE LIFE IS RUINED!”

He freezes.

“WHAT?”

Hannibal hits his father so hard he nearly crashes into the wall. “Hannibal, no!”

The babies start crying more and Will lets out a sob as Hannibal comes over to him.

“Mielasis, I…”

He hands him three of them. “I can’t do this,” he whimpers, “I…is he ok?”

His father groans. “I’m…ok.”

Will lets out a sob as he rushes out of the living room to their bedroom and holds the babies to him. He puts them on his chest, his tears getting worse, and takes comfort in the closeness.

“I’m sorry,” he whispers, “I…I just…”

Hannibal comes in not long after, and hands him the rest of them while Will lays down on the bed. He brushes the curls back from his forehead. “Will…I’m sorry.”

He sniffles. “Don’t be.”

“But…”

“You changed my life,” Will says, smiling, “But you didn’t ruin it.”

“Your father…”

“He doesn’t know what he wants for me,” Will whispers, tears falling down his cheeks, “But he’s not in charge of me anymore. Ok?”

“Ok,” Hannibal says, taking his hand, “I can feel your pain.”

“I know.”

“Your father apologized to me, but I told him he needs to apologize to you.”

“I don’t want to see him.”

“Will…”

“My children are *gifts* ,” Will hisses, “Not a mistake we made.”

“I know, Will, but…he doesn’t understand.”

“He said he did, he…he acted like he was ok with this.”

“I’m sure there’s always going to be a part of him that won’t be.”

Will sniffles and winces as Emma and Ethan both bite him a little. “Fuck him then.”

Hannibal lays down and pulls Will against him. “You thought he would be happy for you.”

“Yeah,” Will laughs, his vision blurry red, “Stupid me.”

“Will…”

“I get that he’s sad I won’t be joining the high school football team or becoming prom king. But this is what I’m supposed to be. Finally.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I know, Mielasis, and I’m very proud of you.”

Will laughs. “Maybe you can be my Dad now?”

Hannibal nuzzles his cheek. “There’s only so much trauma we can give your father in a few weeks. Let’s save that for next year.”

Will laughs again, and feels Dylan squirm on his side. “He’s ready to pop,” he sighs, “Can you..?”

Hannibal takes him off and stands, burping him while Will watches.

“You were born to be a Dad,” Will says, his eyes getting normal again, “You know?”

Hannibal smiles. “We both were.”

“I know, but I just mean…you make it look effortless sometimes.”

“Do I?”

“Yeah.”

“It’s only because I’m watching you and emulating as best I can.”

Will blushes. “Flatterer.”

Hannibal pats Dylan’s back and he throws up on his shoulder crying. “Well, there goes effortless.”

He laughs. “I can…”

“I’ll wipe us both off, Will. We won’t be gone long.”

Will sighs, and touches the other babies heads, holding Emma and Ethan up on his top half.

“How could anyone think you’re a mistake?”

A knock makes him smile. “You don’t have to—”

He frowns as his Dad peeks in, sporting an already black eye. “Son, can we talk?”

Will glares at him. “Why?”

“I fucked up.”

“Dad…”

“Please, Will.”

“Fine.”

He comes inside and Will keeps his hands down across the babies’ backs not moving as he comes closer.

“That’s far enough.”

“Okay,” he sighs, “I think…I overreacted.”

“You think?”

“I *know* I overreacted.”

Will blinks back tears. “Hannibal didn’t ruin my life.”

“Will, before you got here you were just a shy kid who kept to himself and…you were doin’ just fine.”

He sighs. “Who had no friends, no social life, and was all alone except for you.”

“And that was bad?”

“No, but I knew something was missing. The minute I first saw Hannibal, I felt it. I felt the missing piece. Dad, you said you were ok with this.”

“I AM! I love the grandmonsters! I’m ok with Hannibal…sometimes.”

“And yet you just said you thought he ruined my life. Ruin and change are totally different things. If you really think that, then maybe…you should just go.”

His father frowns. “Go? No, Will I can’t go.”

“Why not? You hate seeing my mistakes and…”

His father rushes over to the bed and kneels down. “I don’t hate the babies, Will. I could NEVER hate them. They’re a part of you.”

Will lets out a sob. “Dad…”

He feels Emma wiggle and moves to take her but his father does instead. “I got her.”

Will can barely see through his tears as he watches his Dad gently pat her back. He imagines him doing the same thing to him when he was little and the tears won’t stop coming.

“Are you ashamed of me, Dad?”

He looks at Will and shakes his head. “Never, Kid. Not now, and not ever. I’m ashamed of *her* , and I’m ashamed of myself for keeping so much from you, but not of you. You’re my son by choice, and I couldn’t love you more. I fucking killed someone to keep you, Son. I’d kill more to keep you happy.”

Will shakes his head. “Dad…I….”

“I know I fucked up, ok? I know that, but I also know that this is what you need and want. I…I just have to get used to it a little longer. If you’ll let me.”

He smiles through his tears. “Y…yeah. I…I’ll let you.”

Emma burps and there’s no spit up, just as Hannibal comes into the room. “Is everything alright in here?”

Michael sighs. “Yeah, it’s ok. I…I wanted to apologize to you again, Hannibal.”

Hannibal nods. “I…apologize for…your eye.”

“You could’ve killed me so I consider myself lucky.”

Will laughs. “Dad…”

“And you too, Kid,” he says, “It was uncalled for, and I mighta meant it then but I don’t now.”

“I know.”

“And to the little grandmonsters,” he says, looking at Emma and Dylan before he looks at Will, “I love them all so fucking much you have no idea. I wouldn’t trade them for nothin’ ok?”

Will nods. “Okay.”

“And I meant all that I said. You ask me and I’ll do whatever you need, if I can.”

Will looks at Hannibal briefly before smiling at his Dad. “I know.”

He hands Emma to Hannibal. “I’ll leave you to it. If you want some alone time, just give me a holler.”

“Thank you, Michael.”

“You’re welcome.”

The minute he’s gone Hannibal sits on the bed. “Are you alright?”

“You heard him come in and left me here.”

“You needed to talk.”

“I know, I just…I would’ve liked you here.”

Hannibal puts his hand on Will’s. “I apologize.”

“It’s fine.”

“I heard what Michael said.”

Will nods.

“Are you thinking of telling him?”

He shrugs. “I don’t know.”

“Eventually it’s very much a possibility that Beverly will know and then he will be the only one who doesn’t.”

Will sighs. “Can we just…not talk about it now?”

“As you wish,” Hannibal says, “Do you think they need more?”

“Probably not.”

“I will bring Emma and Dylan to your father while I finish dinner. If you’re alright with that?”

Will nods. “Yeah, that’s ok.”

Hannibal leans down and kisses his forehead. Will closes his eyes as Hannibal touches his cheek.

“You said that the children were a gift,” he whispers, “You were a gift too, Will. This now… is just a bonus.”

Will smiles, and feels the love in their bond grow. “Hannibal…”

“Every day I can spend in your presence is…a gift as well. I know things may have started out wrong, but where we are now just feels…”

“Right,” Will finishes, taking his hand, “So right.”

“Yes.”

Will kisses his hand. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

“Go make me dinner before I just have you take all the babies so we can go for a swim.”

Hannibal smiles. “I wouldn’t object.”

“Hannibal…”

“I will return.”

Will sighs after he's gone, lifting up Ethan and patting his back. It might feel tedious, and neverending to most people but every time he gets to touch his living, breathing babies he's so grateful he could do it forever.

"Daddy loves you," he whispers.

They might not talk back, but he can feel them.

And that's everything.

Chapter 86

The rest of the night is calm, almost too calm but Will is trying to get used to it, and when they fall asleep he's in Haninbal's arms while the babies sleep through the night without waking. He doesn't dream, though he can feel Hannibal's restlessness on and off, and when he's woken up the next morning it's to Hannibal on the phone.

"Yes," he's whispering, "Yes, please. Yes. I…I appreciate that. Yes. I will."

Will turns around and sees Hannibal by the front window looking outside.

"Is everything ok?"

He turns and smiles at him. "Yes, Will, everything is fine."

Will sits up and stretches. "Who was that?"

"No one important," Hannibal says, coming over to sit with him.

He frowns. "It sounded important."

Hannibal kisses him softly, and Will sighs as he pulls him close. "Everything sounds important at seven a.m."

Will groans. "It's SEVEN? I woke up that early when the babies had such a good night?"

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "I apologize," he whispers, "I'm sure it was my fault."

“No, it’s…”

He moves to lay them down again, and Will leans back against him. “Sleep, Mielasis,” he whispers, “If the children wake I’ll take care of them.”

“It won’t work,” Will mumbles, his eyes starting to close, “I’ll still feel you, your feelings and just…you.”

“Perhaps I can learn to block our connection at times so…”

Will turns around fast. “What? No!” he almost yells, “No, Hannibal, I don’t want you to do that.”

Hannibal frowns. “If it’s inconveniencing you…”

“It’s not,” he says, hugging him again, “It’s not, just…don’t. Please don’t.”

Hannibal kissed his cheek. “Will, I can feel your distress…I’m…I apologize for even suggesting such a thing.”

Will feels his teeth heavy in his mouth, and closes his eyes tight knowing his vision will be red.

“It’s fine.”

“No, it’s not.”

“We’re still getting used to it,” Will says, nuzzling his neck, “It’s only been a few days.”

“Yes, you’re right. It just feels like we’ve been connected for so long, it’s hard not to think otherwise.”

He smiles. “Yeah.”

Hannibal runs fingers through his hair and Will sighs. “Are you seeing Beverly today?”

“I dunno. Why?”

“I have an errand to run soon, and don’t like you to feel overwhelmed with the children for long all alone.”

Will frowns, and opens his eyes slowly looking up. “Where are you going?”

“Nowhere important.”

“Are you…why won’t you just tell me?”

Hannibal smiles and kisses him softly. “It’s a surprise, Will. I’d like it to be a surprise.”

He tries to smile. “Oh.”

“I will not be gone long, I promise.”

“Ok.”

“Will…”

“I’m fine, Hannibal.”

“You don’t seem fine.”

Will shakes his head. “I’m a big boy, ok?” Will says, smiling, “I’ll be fine.”

He kisses his cheek again. “Would you…like to…have a shower with me before I go?”

Will feels his whole body warm and hums, turning to him. “Now?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, “The children are asleep. It’s a perfect time.”

“They could wake up.”

“Yes, I suppose.”

Will feels wet all over his backside and wiggles, suddenly aching all over. “I…I think maybe we should wait for Dad.”

“Will…”

“I might want you to jump me right now, but I’m still not gonna leave my kids alone for it.”

Hannibal hugs him close and kisses his mating bite. “I apologize for being selfish in my want of you.”

“Don’t, it’s…”

“We have plenty of time to be together, Will, I was merely…hungry for you.”

Will sighs. “Now you’re just being unfair.”

He smiles and gets up off the couch. “I need to shower,” he says, “If you’d care to join me later…the door will be unlocked.”

Will groans as Hannibal leaves him, and falls back against the couch cushions. The babies are all still quietly asleep, and he decides to make himself a quick breakfast. Toast won’t take long, and he’ll be close enough to hear them he’s sure.

He pulls his robe close to him as he walks into the kitchen, grabs some bread, and puts it into the toaster. The minute he hears it pop up the babies start to cry.

“Shit.”

Will rushes out of the kitchen, and sees his Dad holding Dylan. “It’s just one, Son,” he says, smiling, “Go have breakfast.”

“Thanks, I’ll…I won’t be long.”

“It’s ok, he just needs a change I think.”

Will runs back in, grabs his toast, and hurries up so fast he nearly chokes. He runs back out, barely tasting much of what he had, and sees Dylan is swimming in the pool.

“He’s fine, Will, and I know where the milk is.”

He looks down the hall. “Um, I’m…”

“Just…don’t be too loud,” his Dad sighs, “Please?”

Will blushes. “Okay, Dad.”

“I’m gonna be out here pretending you’re playing video games.”

“In the shower?”

His father glares at him. “Yes.”

Will laughs. “Ok, Dad.”

“Go now before I change my mind.”

Will runs down the hallway and is half naked even before he opens the door. Hannibal is already peeking out of the shower curtain. “Will..”

He throws him at him, growling, and drops shift as Hannibal’s claws dig into his back.

“Dad’s watching them,” he moans, “I…god, just…”

Hannibal turns him around roughly, plastering Will to the wall, and thrusts in hard. Will moans, biting his lip to keep quiet, and Hannibal’s teeth on his neck only make his ass more wet.

“You’re keeping your noises from me?”

“D…ad…”

He kisses Will’s earlobe, teasing his teeth, and Will gushes as he hums. “Your beautiful noises, kept hidden, it’s a crime not to hear them.”

Will shudders as he pulls out, thrusting in again, and Will’s fins are flush to his chest as he feels Hannibal’s pleasure echo back at him.

Please, I…I promised.

I will allow it…for now.

Hannibal begins to fuck him in earnest, his clawed hand wrapping around Will’s cock as he moves, and it doesn’t take long at all for Will to fall over the edge as their pleasures melt together. He bites Will’s neck, humming louder now, and Will opens his mouth to hum along.

“Will…”

“Love you,” he moans, “L…”

He feels Hannibal come inside him, the echo between them so intense he’s almost lightheaded, and when he’s holding Will up after it’s just perfect.

“This is how we were meant to be, Will,” he whispers, his long tongue licking down the back of Will’s neck, “How we were always meant to be.”

“I love you.”

“And I you.”

They separate with difficulty, the sadness that always follows making Will need more kisses. Hannibal gives him that and more, washing away the remains of their pleasure, and when they exit the bathroom he hears the babies crying.

“Shit.”

“Your father is fine, Will,” Hannibal whispers, “If he needed help, he’d ask for it.”

“But…”

“Get dressed and then go help.”

Will nods, and goes into his room to dress. He rushes, even though Hannibal told him not to, and when he finally goes back down the hall his Dad is holding three babies while the others are in the pool.

“I think they like me more now!” he says, laughing as Emma pokes him in the nose.

Will smiles. “They’re getting more playful.”

His Dad smiles. “You were a smart kid like this,” he says, as Will takes Emma, “I thought it was just because you were…you know…but you didn’t grow this fast.”

Will smiles at Emma. “They are growing fast, huh?”

“Very.”

He smiles. “They’re really amazing,” he whispers, “I…I honestly didn’t think…”

Emma suddenly starts to cry and Will sighs, pulling off his shirt.

“You didn’t think what?”

“That they’d be…I dunno. I mean everything that happened before and…after…”

“Will…”

Will blinks back tears. “I’m just…really happy to see they’re thriving.”

His Dad wraps an arm around him. “Me too.”

“Even though…”

“Will, I know I said some stupid stuff yesterday but I…I’m gonna try to get beyond that, and it was a terrible thing to say.”

Will sighs. “I know it’s not what you wanted for me.”

“No, but it’s what you needed. I was keeping you from being you.”

He smiles. “You didn’t know.”

“I did know,” he says, frowning, “I just…I didn’t want to lose you.”

“You’re not gonna lose me Dad, it’s…”

Hannibal comes down the hall, and pauses to look at them. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“Will?”

He shakes his head. “We’re fine.”

“You’re certain?”

“Yeah.”

Hannibal walks over and kisses Will’s cheek. “I will return later.”

“Ok.”

“Is there anything you need me to bring home?”

“Diapers, probably, and…can you get some fish?”

Hannibal smiles. “Of course. I will be home this afternoon.”

“Ok.”

Will frowns as he leaves, and moves Emma to his nipple to drink.

“Where’s he going?”

“I don’t know,” he mumbles, “He said it’s a surprise.”

“So he’s just leaving you high and dry?”

Will sighs. “Dad…”

“Fine,” he mumbles, bringing the other babies to the water, “I’m gonna go make some eggs or something. You want some?”

“Sure.”

Will watches him go, and looks down at Emma.

“Daddy will be home soon,” he says, frowning, “And Grandpa…he’ll get better. I promise.”

Emma doesn’t do anything other than close her eyes, and he runs his fingers through her hair.

She looks like him, but mostly like Hannibal. Anyone who saw them together would never be able to think otherwise.

How was he going to make people even believe she was his and not Hannibal’s?

He frowns.

“People are stupid,” he whispers, “They won’t know.”

Probably.

Emma finishes just as Dad comes back with the eggs, and Will puts her on his shoulder to burp. “Thanks, Dad.”

“I’ll hold it till you’re done.”

“Ok.”

His Dad watches Will burp her, and Emma wiggles her fingers toward the water where Will puts her with her siblings. They both watch the babies swim, and smile.

“They really work together in a unit or something, huh?”

“Like a school of fish,” Will jokes.

“Will…”

“I mean…I’m not wrong.”

“Still, stop.”

He laughs and takes a bite of his eggs. “I got my humor from you.”

“Thankfully.”

They both smile.

Breakfast is mostly quiet after that, and Dad helps feed the kids after until they’re all asleep again. Will lays down, tired, and is about to close his eyes when his cellphone buzzes.

Chiyoh is coming over again today. I’d really love for you to meet her.

He frowns.

Hannibal is out doing something, and Dad can’t take care of the kids on his own.

It’s ok, I was just saying it. I know you have a lot going on.

I’d like to meet her too.

=)

He sighs.

This lie was eating away at him, and would continue until Chiyoh came clean. But when she did Bev would be devastated when he had to tell her he kept things from her.

Will sighs again.

Have a good time.

We will ;P

Will puts his phone down and closes his eyes, trying to calm his nerves. Things would work out, they had to, because the alternative wasn't acceptable. He needs Bev in his life, and Bev wouldn't be able to deal with more heartbreak.

Not again.

He's just about to close his eyes when he feels Hannibal near.

The car pulls into the driveway a second later, and he runs to the door to meet him. Will kisses him before he's halfway inside.

Hannibal smiles. "I missed you too."

Will takes some bags from him. "You were gone way too long."

"It took longer than I planned, I apologize."

He frowns. "Is everything ok?"

Hannibal smiles as he picks up a pack of fish. "I found fish."

"Hannibal…"

He kisses Will again softly, pulling him in close. “Everything is fine, Will. I promise. This will be a good surprise.”

Will frowns. “Ok.”

“How were the children?”

“Good, actually. For me and Dad.”

“I’m glad.”

They put away the food, though Hannibal does start to cook because Will is suddenly starving. He watches him, standing near, and when the food is done they eat together at the table.

“We should get Dad.”

“He can reheat his.”

Will laughs. “Hannibal…”

“I’m sure he can smell it, Will.”

Dad comes in a minute later, gives Hannibal a look, and then leaves.

“I take it you know what that was about?”

Will takes a bite and sighs. “He was mad you were leaving me alone.”

Hannibal glares in the direction his Dad left. “I’m mad at him about many things that were way worse.”

“Hannibal…”

He puts his hand on the table over Will’s and sighs. “I apologize.”

Will smiles. “I know, it’s just…he’s trying now.”

“He needs to realize there are things he doesn’t know, and will never understand.”

Will frowns. “He does know that.”

Hannibal entwines their fingers. “Will, I’m not talking about our species.”

“Is this about the surprise?”

“Yes.”

He sticks his lip out and feels like a kid pouting. “I hate that you’re keeping a secret from me.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “It’s a good one, I promise.”

They settle on the couch after dinner, and the kids begin to wake one by one. Will can barely keep his eyes open by dinner, and Dad orders a pizza because Hannibal refuses to leave him alone with them.

“I’m fine if you want to…”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “No.”

They eat together on the couch when it comes, and Will ends up falling asleep but wakes to Hannibal’s humming in his ear.

“Mmm?”

“Go back to sleep, Will.”

“I’m ok, I just…”

He kisses his cheek. “I’ve just put the last of the babies to bed, and you need your rest.”

“But…”

He pulls Will into his lap, and runs his hand over Will’s head.

“If I have to make you sleep, Will, I am not against using other means.”

“You promised never to do that again.”

“I know.”

Will looks up at him.

“This secret,” he says, yawning, “It’s…it’s not a dog, is it?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “No, Will, it’s not.”

He smiles, and closes his eyes. “Ok.”

Will can feel their bond humming between them, and for the first time all day he feels like he can rest.

You can.

He sighs, and clutches Hannibal’s back with his claws as he falls asleep.

Everything is ok now that they’re together.

Everything is just…perfect.

Chapter 87

Will feels Hannibal wake up early the next morning, and yawns lifting his head.

“What’s going on?”

He’s sitting on the edge of the couch, and he smiles at Will. “I have an early meeting.”

Will frowns, and grabs his phone. “It’s six a.m.”

Hannibal leans over to kiss Will softly. “I promise you, Mielasis, it’s for a good reason.”

“Why can’t you just tell me what’s going on?”

He touches Will’s cheek. “Because I want this to be a surprise, Will. Please allow me this.”

Will frowns. “Ok.”

He watches him leave the room, and the only thing he can hear is the occasional noises the babies make while they sleep. It’s strange to be alone now, more so than ever before, and he doesn’t like it.

What was Hannibal hiding?

Will lays down again, more hurt than he should be, and tries to fall asleep. The sound of Hannibal coming back makes him open his eyes, and Will bites his lip as he heads for the door. He turns and frowns at him.

“Will, I’m coming back. There’s no need to be upset.”

He frowns. “I know, I just…I don’t like this whole secret thing.”

Hannibal comes over and kneels on the side of the couch. He frowns and touches his cheek.

“It’s not a bad secret, Mielasis. Not like the others I’ve had.”

Will nods. “I know.”

“But?”

“I just…secrets have fucked us up a lot. It’s hard not to remember that.”

Hannibal kisses him again, and this time it’s deeper. Will sighs, pulling him in closer, and Hannibal bites his bottom lip with sharp teeth. He licks at Will’s blood, and lifts his head up to smile.

“I will tell you when I return tonight, if everything is finalized.”

Will lets out a long breath, and takes his hand. “Promise?”

He kisses his hand softly. “I promise.”

“I love you.”

Hannibal smiles and squeezes his hand. “I live and breathe for you, Will.”

Will smiles. “You have to one up me, huh?”

“I’m just telling the truth.”

He gets up off the couch, and heads for the door watching Will all the while. Will sighs as he leaves, and can’t resist getting up to look outside. It’s still dark, but the outside light is on, and Hannibal leaving still feels like he’s losing a limb.

This is an overreaction, he knows, but their bond obviously thinks differently.

Will watches the car as it drives off, and sighs heading for the kitchen. He makes himself some toast, and sneaks in a bit of last night’s fish before Dad can make a face seeing him eat it. He smiles as he eats his toast, grabbing some juice in the fridge, and walks out to the living room to still sleeping babies.

It’s a good morning so far.

He checks his phone.

I need some baby time today, if you can climb off Hannibal for that long.

Will smiles.

He’s actually out for a few hours, if you’re up now.

Really? The two of you can be apart that long?

Barely.

Lol. Can I come by? I'll bring donuts *bats eyelashes*

Sure.

Cool! Give me twenty minutes and I'll be right there!

Ok. =)

Will sets his phone down, checking the time.

It wasn't even six thirty yet.

Why was Bev awake so early?

He frowns and gets up to check on the babies. They're still sound asleep, content in their bassinets, and Will frowns again.

His room wasn't far, just down the hall, but leaving to get dressed felt weird. The kitchen was just two doors away, but his bedroom felt like it wasn't close enough.

Will sits down, sipping his juice, contemplating going to get dressed just as there's a knock on the door. He gets up fast and runs to let Bev in.

"Hey," she says, throwing an arm around his shoulder in a side hug while she holds a box, "It's…quiet, huh?"

He smiles. "They're still asleep. Last night was good actually, they slept through the night."

“Wow, so soon?”

“I mean…they’re growing really fast so it shouldn’t be a surprise.”

Bev smiles as she shuts the door.

“I’m sure that was good for you and Hannibal, huh?”

Will blushes. “We just slept.”

“Bummer.”

He laughs and takes the box from her. “How was *your* night? Chiyoh came by?”

Bev sits on the couch and sighs, smiling. “She did,” she says, her smile widening, “She really *came* over.”

Will freezes with his hand on a donut. “You…and she…?”

Bev picks up a chocolate donut and wiggles her eyebrows. “Oh me and *she* .”

He tries not to make a weird face. “Oh, how was that?”

“How *was* that? Is that what you’re gonna say when I tell you I had sex with my girlfriend?”

Will takes a bite, faking a smile. “No, I just…if you don’t want to say…”

Bev laughs. “It was…I mean I’ve been with other girls before. Not a lot, but…I’ve never felt like I did with her. You know? She…I don’t know how to explain it.”

Will feels worry seep into his thoughts. “It felt like you found something you didn’t know you lost.”

“That!” she says, a little too loud, and the babies make a bit of noise, “Oh, sorry. I just…I’m really happy.”

He takes another bite, and tries to keep his thoughts to himself.

Chiyoh said she wouldn’t hurt Bev.

She promised him that.

But if something happened last night, Will had to know.

“She slept over?” he asked.

Bev shook her head. “She sort of…well she met my parents and then pretended to go home. I snuck her in,” she says, laughing, “I’ve honestly never done that with anyone but I really didn’t want to leave her.”

He smiles. “You like her a lot.”

She blushes. “Like is too little a word.”

“Love?”

Bev’s eyes widen. “No, I mean…not yet, I don’t think? I’m falling, for sure. She’s just…I feel like…no one has ever made me feel this way. I feel *safe* with her. Every part of me feels…like I’ve found my person.”

Will’s chest aches. “I’m happy for you, Bev.”

She finishes her donut and pulls down her shirt a little. “And I gotta say, I’ve never been with anyone who was such a biter.”

All over Bev’s neck are bite marks.

Obviously bite marks.

Will looks away, squeezing his eyes shut tight as his vision goes red.

He’s shaking, biting his lip, and wants to tell her everything.

“Will? Are you ok?”

Will is about to speak when suddenly all the babies start crying. He gets up, running to Dylan and picking him up along with Emma not far away. “I…I gotta feed them.”

“I can help!” Bev says, “You have bottles in the fridge, right?”

He looks away, hoping she can’t see his eyes. “Yeah, I have a few.”

Bev runs toward the kitchen, and he grabs Ethan before laying down opening his shirt. He puts them up to his nipples to feed and winces when Ethan bites. “Hey, hey,” he teases, “Be nice.”

“I’m back!”

She picks up the other three and feeds them in a strange hold with one on her chest and the others in her arms. “I don’t know how you do this,” she laughs, “It’s gotta be hard even with help.”

Will sighs, holding the babies tight, “You can give me Sebastian, if you need to.”

Bev grins. “We’re good here.”

He’s glad for the distraction, his worry about Bev and Chiyoh gone but not forgotten, and when he has to lift up the babies for burping Bev starts talking again.

“I know I said I was happy about last night,” she says, “But something else happened that I’m kinda not sure about.”

Will blinks. “A bad thing?”

“I don’t know,” she says, lifting Liam onto her shoulder, “I mean…Chiyoh tells me everything she thinks and wants, right? But she said last night when we were…” she makes motions with her hands and blushes, “That she wanted to tell me something important but then we got hot and heavy and didn’t.”

“And you didn’t ask?”

“I didn’t want to,” Bev mumbles, frowning, “I dont think it’s another Abby situation, but I just…what if she’s about to tell me she’s got like a secret husband or she’s a royal descendant

of some random Queen or something?"

Will frowns. "What if it's…I mean what if it's not something bad but it's just not something you'll expect?"

Bev looks at him oddly. "What's that supposed to mean?"

He moves Dylan to his arm and lifts up Emma. "I just…I waited a long time to talk to Hannibal about me, and…"

"I think hiding the fact that you're a sea monster is way different than what Chiyoh wants to tell me, Will."

Will smiles. "Yeah, you're…you're probably right."

"I just don't want anything to go wrong, you know? I mean she might just be telling me she loves me which is *great* , so I should stop overthinking it."

He finishes his donut and nurses all three of his children, trying not to panic.

Was Chiyoh going to tell Bev everything soon?

Would she tell her that he knew and kept it secret?

Will lets Emma, Ethan, and Dylan into the pool and Bev does the same with the other three. They watch them swim, and he sighs, pulling the comforter up over him while eating more donuts.

"Hungry?" she jokes.

He looks down.

All the donuts are gone.

Will blinks. “Sorry,” he mumbles, finishing the last, “I guess I was.”

Bev frowns. “Are you ok?”

He smiles. “I’m fine. Why?”

“I just…I mean…you’re acting a little weird.”

Will blushes. “I’m not.”

Bev pulls him into another side hug, and he lays on her shoulder. “You are, but it’s ok you’re sleep deprived.”

Will sighs. “Yeah.”

“I’m just gonna say,” she says, “If I end up having kids you’d best believe I’m stopping at one.”

He laughs.

“You love them.”

“Oh, I do, but it’s because I get to go home after this.”

Will puts his arm around her back and squeezes. “I love you, Bevvy.”

She hugs back. “I love you too, Graham. Now, tell me…why hasn’t your husband gotten you a TV in here yet? You’ve got to be bored when you’re sitting here.”

Will laughs. “Usually we’re in the water with the babies.”

“Ok, but not like all the time. Right?”

He nods. “A lot of the time.”

“And that’s enough?”

“I like swimming.”

She laughs. “Ok, if you say so. But do you want to watch something on my phone? The kids are fine, right?”

Will smiles. “Ok.”

They start to watch “Slasher School,” with the volume down super low, and are half into it when Will’s dad comes into the room. “Are you watching a horror movie with my grandchildren right there?”

Will blushes. “They’re fine!”

His Dad smiles, shaking his head. “If you want to go watch it in the other room I can watch ‘em.”

Will shakes his head. “We’re good, Dad.”

He shrugs. “Suit yourself.”

They nearly all of it when the babies start to get fussy again, and end up rocking them to sleep one by one until they’re exhausted.

“Where is your husband?” Bev sighs, “He’s got things to do.”

Will frowns. “He’s at a secret meeting.”

Bev frowns. “Secret?”

“It’s not a bad secret, he says it’s not.”

“Will, the last time he had a secret it was that he was a sea monster.”

Will blushes, frowning. “It’s not like that, Bev.”

“Ok, but you don’t *know* that.”

He glares at her. “We’re *mated* , Bev. You have no idea what that means.”

“I know, but…”

“He would never hurt me like that, not again!” he hisses loudly, making the babies all wake up again, “Shit, I…fuck they’re awake.”

“Will…”

He picks them up, in near tears, and Bev goes to touch Beverly but he steps in front of her.

“ *Don’t* , ok? Just…don’t. I’m fine. You can go home.”

Bev frowns. “Will, I’m sorry. Okay? I just don’t want you to be hurt like that again.”

“Worry about yourself, Bev,” he growls, pulling the other bassinets close to him as tears fill his eyes, “We’re just fine here.”

She frowns. “I…ok. I’m gonna go because you’re mad but I’m coming back to fix this.”

Will ignores her, and sits down with so many babies he can hardly keep them in his arms. The sound of the door closing makes him let out a sob, and his Dad comes over fast.

“Hey, hey, let me help.”

He takes Sebastian and Liam, and sits with them.

“Can I ask what happened in the few minutes I was gone?”

“I got mad at her.”

“I figured. But…why?”

Will sniffles. “It’s nothing, Dad. Ok?”

“Ok, Kid.”

He rocks the babies to sleep, and is half exhausted when Hannibal comes into the door. His Dad is putting Sebastian and Liam into their bassinets when he stops to glare at him.

“Oh, now you’re back?”

Hannibal frowns, and looks at Will.

“I could feel Will’s distress so I returned.”

Will lets his Dad take Emma and Ethan, while still rocking Beverly and Dylan.

“Took you long enough,” he mumbles.

“What’s happened?”

“Your family needs you,” His Dad says, “That’s what’s happened. I don’t know what the hell you have going on, but whatever it is can’t be more important than that.”

Hannibal’s eyes turn red. “ *Nothing* is more important than my family, Michael. Nothing.”

Will's chest aches. "Dad, it's fine. Please just…let us talk this out on our own."

His Dad looks at Will. "I'm not gonna let this keep going on, but I'll go because you asked. Your *mate* is not my favorite sea creature at the moment so I should go anyway before I get my neck broken."

He stomps off, and Hannibal comes over to Will fast, pulling him into his arms. "What happened?"

Will clutches him tight. "I got into it with Bev," he mumbles, "I…she and Chiyoh…had sex and then she said Chiyoh wants to tell her something important and I'm just so…and then she started to question your secret and that you might hurt me again lying and I…"

Hannibal kisses the tears from Will's cheeks, pulling back to frown at him.

"Will, I promised you I would never hurt you like that ever again."

"I know," Will whispers, "But she kept going and I almost…I wanted to tell her so bad. I…"

Hannibal wipes the tears from Will's cheeks.

"I'm so sorry, Mielasis. We can contact Chiyoh if you'd like, and tell her you're unable to continue."

Will sniffles. "It's not my secret to tell."

"It isn't, but it's still hurting you as if it is."

He falls forward against Hannibal's chest, and breathes in his scent. "I missed you."

Hannibal kisses his head, and nuzzles his neck. “I missed you too.”

“Did…did everything go ok?”

Hannibal lifts Will’s chin and smiles. “It went very well.”

Will frowns. “Can you tell me now?”

Hannibal pulls Will closer, and Will all but climbs into his lap with a sigh.

“Better yet, I can show you.”

He frowns. “What?”

He pulls out his phone, and pokes it a few times before turning the whole thing around.

It’s the outside of the other house, the one Hannibal first lived in with his family, and it’s… being worked on.

Will looks up. “You got the permit?”

“Yes, finally.”

He hugs Hannibal hard, and laughs. “Why didn’t you just tell me?”

“I wanted it to be a surprise, and it seems to have been a good one.”

Will kisses him, flips through more pictures, and feels warm all over just looking at them.

“I wish you didn’t have to take any of it down, but…I’m really excited.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “As am I.”

He smiles. “Thank you,” he says, “For…for doing this, and for…telling me. The suspense was killing me.”

Hannibal smiles. “You’re welcome.”

Will flips through more pictures, so happy he feels like he could burst, and feels like nothing but good things are coming.

“Our home,” he whispers, “Just ours.”

Hannibal pulls him closer and whispers in his ear. “Just ours…at last.”

Chapter 88

The babies wake them both just before sunrise, and together they get through six dirty diapers while Hannibal tells Will they have to change the water again so not baby swim time. The kids look upset to be denied but Will nurses them while humming their song as Hannibal changes the water.

It's soothing for all of them, he thinks, and soon they all fall asleep again just as Hannibal is scrubbing the pool edges.

"They're out," he sighs, eyes heavy, "I don't even know what time it is."

"It's got to be near sunrise, or close to it. Check your phone."

Will grabs his phone from the table beside the couch and when the screen lights up he sees a full page of notifications.

All from Bev.

Text and phone calls both.

He sits up fast, wide awake, and opens his phone.

Will, please pick up.

I know you're mad at me but I don't know what to do.

Please.

The first message makes him freeze.

“Will? Will I…I…she…she lied to me! Again! I don’t…why does this keep happening to me? WHY DO THEY ALL KEEP USING ME?”

He calls back, tears in his eyes, and Hannibal looks up.

“Will?”

Will shakes his head. “She told her late last night, and I had my phone off. I…”

Hannibal gets up out of the pool and comes to sit with him. Will lays against him and he holds him close. The phone rings and rings but there’s no answer.

He shakes his head.

“I have to go see her,” Will says, “I…”

“It can wait till daylight, Will. It’s four a.m.”

Will gets up, shaking his head. “I have to, Hannibal,” he says, his voice shaking, “She’d do the same for me.”

“Will…”

He walks down the hall, throwing off his clothes, quickly changes, and grabs his keys before coming back again. Hannibal stands in front of the door and Will walks up to him.

“Hannibal, I have to.”

Hannibal sighs. “Will you tell her you knew?”

He nods. “I have to tell her, it’s…I’ve been waiting for so long and…I can’t keep this from her.”

“It could end badly.”

“I know.”

Hannibal pulls him into a hug and Will sighs, closing his eyes.

“Please call me when you get there.”

“I will.”

Hannibal steps away from the door and Will walks outside. It’s so eerily quiet as he gets to his car, that even when he slides into the driver’s seat he locks the doors. Will pulls out his phone again and texts Bev.

I’m coming. I’m so sorry.

Bev doesn’t respond, he didn’t expect her to by now, and when he drives off it’s painful to be separated from his family but he doesn't stop. The drive there is filled with worries, mostly about Bev but also about what she’ll say.

Will she be mad at him for not telling her about Chiyoh?

Can he explain to her why without just pissing her off?

He pulls into the Katz family driveway what feels like eons later, and Bev is already sitting outside. Will calls Hannibal who answers immediately.

"I'm here."

"Good luck, Mielasis. I'm here if you need me."

Will takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. *"I love you."*

"I love you too."

Will ends the call, stuffing his phone into his jeans, and his chest aches as he gets out of the car. He sits beside her on the stairs and she leans into him, burying her face into his neck, and sobs.

"Bev, I'm so…"

She can't stop crying, clutching him so hard he could feel nails in his back, and he hugs her harder.

"I don't know what to say," he says, rubbing her back, "I…"

Bev looks up at him. "You don't even know what happened yet," she says, sniffling, "You… oh god you're gonna be even more mad at me now."

“What? Why would I…”

She stands, wiping her face, and shakes her head. “Not her, not…my parents already are watching me like a hawk after they heard us yelling late last night. I’m grounded, by the way, so we can’t leave but we can go to the back.”

Will nods and she leads around the back of the house where they walk all the way down to the dock. The last time he was here he’d been attacked by Matt, and the memory makes him shiver. They sit down together, both taking off their shoes, and dip their feet in the water.

“What happened?”

“She stayed over again last night, after I called her upset about…you and me fighting.”

“I’m sorry about that,” Will says, “I overreacted and…”

Bev shakes her head and leans against his shoulder. “I was a jerk, it’s fine, honestly I…I need to tell you everything.”

Will nods. “Okay.”

“We kissed a lot, not much else, and played some stuff but mostly it was just… *being together* , you know? I…I’ve only had like three girlfriends my entire life and being with her…”

She lets out a sob.

“Bev…”

“She started to hum,” Bev says, and Will freezes, “It was the prettiest song, and I hummed along without knowing the tune. She got so excited, Will,” she whispered, her voice shaking, “And…she…she told me she had to tell me something but in the bathroom.”

Will grabs her hand and squeezes it. “Bev, I have to—”

“Let me finish,” she says, her voice rough as she looks at him in tears, “She took me there, and she…she started taking off her clothes and I was like ‘ok but I’m not really up for anything’ as a joke and she…Will she…she…”

“...she’s like me,” he finishes, and she tenses up against him.

“Y…yeah,” she says, moving back, “You…how are you so calm about this?”

Will takes her other hand and squeezes hard. “Bev…”

Bev frowns. “What?”

“I knew about Chiyoh already,” he says, his voice thick as he confesses, “She was spying on Hannibal and me at the house, and then you told me who she was and she…”

She yanks her hands back, eyes wide. “WHAT? How did…why…Will, no! You…you would’ve told me!”

Will feels tears run down his face. “It wasn’t my place to tell you!” he yells, not caring how late it is, “It…it was *her* secret, and I…”

Bev backs away from him, shaking her head. “How could you just keep that from me? I…I’d never…how could you even…of all the people in the world I knew I could trust YOU and

then…”

Will runs up to her. “Bev, just let me explain!”

She pushes him back hard. “Don’t TOUCH ME! Fuck you and your whole fucking fish monster shit! I can’t…!”

Will doesn’t follow her, he knows he’s not wanted, and is sobbing as he pulls out his phone again. He dials Hannibal’s number as he gets into the car.

“Will?”

“She hates me,” he cries, wiping his face, “She…she was so…”

“Oh Will,” Hannibal sighs, “Please come home.”

Will nods, wiping his cheeks. “I…I’m coming I…oh god…”

“Will, please, I can’t stand to feel you in pain. Please hurry.”

He pulls out of the driveway, sobbing, and drives back toward the house. The pain is so much he can hardly breathe, and when he parks just barely in the driveway Hannibal runs out to meet him. Will sobs against his chest, and he lifts him up with ease.

“I don’t…I can’t…I…”

“Shh…”

Will whimpers as he turns them toward the water. “The babies…”

“Your father is awake,” he says, “And I told him that you and Beverly had a worse falling out than you did already. He’s promised to take care of them while we’re gone.”

He sets Will down, taking off his clothes, and together they jump into the water. They drop shift immediately, and take off in a rush through the water. It’s soothing, the cool water against his true skin, and as he swims Will lets the pain dull.

I missed this.

I know.

They swim till dawn, chasing and catching until Will can hardly remember what upset him in the first place. Hannibal leads him to their cave,

“Will…”

“Please,” Will whimpers, shaking with need to big he can hardly breathe, “Please, please, please…”

His whole body is filled with heat as Hannibal thrusts inside him, and tentacles wrap around his cock as Hannibal’s relentless fucking makes him scream.

“Don’t stop,” he gasps, “Don’t…”

“Never,” Hannibal growls, “Never ever…”

He bites Will’s neck as his tentacles jerk Will’s cock while tears run down his face.

Will hums, pressing his lips near Hannibal's ear, and Hannibal does the same.

It's their song, echoed back, and Will drowns in pleasure as he comes with a scream.

Hannibal drills into him more, growling as Will bites into his neck, and when he spills into Will the heat is so intense Will drowns in it.

"I love you," Will repeated, over and over as he fights not to collapse, "Hannibal, don't ever…please don't ever…"

"I live and breathe for you, Mielasis. Today and every day. I will always find you, remember? Always."

They cling to each other after, nuzzling and humming until Will sighs.

"We have to go back."

Hannibal kisses his cheek. "Yes."

Will pulls back, wincing at the separation, and Hannibal kisses him again.

"I'm sorry, Will."

"I know."

"She'll understand, Will. She loves you."

Will shakes his head. “I just…I want to go home.”

Hannibal takes his hand. “As you wish.”

They swim back together, hand in hand, and when they make it to shore he starts to put on his clothes. “There’s no need, we’re already wet.”

Will sighs. “My dad will have a heart attack.”

Hannibal sighs. “I suppose that should be avoided.”

The two of them step into the house to find his father filling the pool and the babies still asleep.

“Wait, they didn’t wake up?”

“Nope,” he says, carrying two more buckets into the pool, “Perfect angels, all of them,” he frowns at Will, “Are you ok, Son?”

Will shakes his head. “Not right now, no, but…I’ll be ok.”

His Dad sighs. “I’m sorry, Kid.”

“I know, Dad.”

“Does anyone want breakfast?”

“Please.”

Will lays down, still wet, and watches his father fill the pool. It’s soothing, the repetition, and he soon fights to keep his eyes open.

“For what it’s worth….I think whatever happened with you and Beverly…it’ll pass. When two people are as close as I’ve seen the two of you are, fights don’t last.”

He closes his eyes. “This one might.”

“Nah.”

Will turns away and sighs, tiredness kicking in. He falls asleep fast, and is woken up by Hannibal’s voice.

“Breakfast is done, Will.”

He sits up, groaning, and Hannibal hands him some sausages that he eats up immediately.

“You are one hell of a cook, Hannibal,” His father says, and Will looks over to see him sitting at the table, “This meat is fucking great.”

Will looks at Hannibal.

Who are we eating?

This is animal meat, I swear.

Will smiles and leans against him, taking a bite of toast along with to his happiness a freshly grilled fish.

“I love you.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “You need and I provide.”

He eats every bite, and Hannibal leaves with their dishes just before the babies start to wake.

“I can help!” His dad says, rushing over.

“Thanks Dad.”

Diapers changed and babies fed, he lets them swim in the new water. He tries not to think about Bev, but the betrayed look on her face when Will confessed is burned into his memory. Will takes a few deep breaths, sighs, and gets up off the couch again.

“I need some air,” he mumbles, “I’ll be right back, Dad.”

“Okay, Son. Take your time.”

Will goes outside again and sits down at the edge of the water. He dips his feet, but it doesn’t help, and tears start to fall down his cheeks again.

He should’ve told her.

It was obvious now, really.

Chiyoh was a creature, yes, but she wasn't Bev.

Will covers his face with his hands as he lets out a sob, and sighs when Hannibal sits down beside him. He pulls Will in for a hug and he closes his eyes.

"I've never been very close with anyone," he whispers, running his fingers through Will's curls, "Other than my sister. We weren't close in age but…she was my best friend. I know it's not the same, but…I do feel that Beverly will forgive you when you're given the chance to explain."

Will sniffles. "You didn't see her face."

"No, but I felt your pain."

He looks up. "I'm sorry."

"I'm not," Hannibal says, touching his cheek, "Our bond is the best thing that's ever happened to me, other than meeting you and…the children."

Will smiles.

"I…"

A splash makes them both turn, and Will sees someone peek up from under the water.

It's Chiyoh.

Will doesn't move, can't, and Hannibal shakes his head.

“Now is that the time, Chiyoh.”

She’s shifted, but shifts back human as she looks at them with red rimmed eyes. “I need her back,” she whispers, “I…we’re…I can’t lose her because of this. She’s my…”

“I know,” Will says, his voice thick, “She told me about the humming.”

Hannibal pauses. “What?”

“Bev knew Chiyoh’s song,” Will whispers, leaning against him, “Like I knew yours.”

“That’s…remarkable.”

Chiyoh’s lip quivers and she wipes her face with webbed hands. “She’s mine,” she says, “I… I know I can’t mate with her fully….”

“Not necessarily,” Hannibal says, shaking his head, “True mated pairs are very rare and yes she’s human but she knows your song.”

She frowns.

“She despises me now.”

“Yes, but that can change.”

Chiyoh doesn’t come out of the water, but shifts again, and Will stares at her longer than he did last time. She’s different from them, the purple of her fins and skin just as beautiful as he

remembers and when she turns the shimmer is still blinding. She has two fins on her upper back, and her tail reminds him of a mermaid.

“I’m sorry,” he says, “I…I love her too.”

She looks at him, nods, and disappears under the water again.

Will sighs as Hannibal holds him closer.

“I promise you Will,” he whispers, kissing Will’s forehead, “She will forgive you.”

He closes his eyes. “I hope so.”

Will doesn’t know what he’ll do if she doesn’t.

Chapter 89

The next two days are uneventful, though the babies grow big enough that they don't fit in their clothes.

Will stares at the t-shirt he tries to put on Dylan after a swim the morning of the second day and frowns. "Um…"

Hannibal isn't home - house stuff - and he can't leave with them.

Apparently they were already outgrowing their clothes after a little over a week of being hatched.

He smiles as he brings Dylan over to the couch, the others sound asleep after feeding.

"I guess Daddy should do some shopping, huh?" he says, holding him close as he rocks him.

Dylan babbles happily, fine being in his swim diaper, and Will grabs his phone.

Bev hasn't answered any of his texts or called back.

And they haven't seen Chiyoh either.

He frowns as he sets the phone back down again.

Maybe she never would forgive him.

Will feels Dylan settle, and puts him in the bassinet before sitting down again. He lays his head back against the couch and takes a deep breath he lets out slowly.

There are so many things that have happened this summer.

A lot of bad.

But so many good.

He picks up his phone and texts Bev again.

Will: I'm sorry.

He stares at the text, hoping, and sighs when nothing comes. Will grips the phone tight in his fist as he lays down, tears filling his eyes, and he's about to throw it across the room when his Dad comes in from the garage.

"Will?"

Will wipes his cheeks. "I'm ok."

"You don't look it."

He sighs. "Bev just…I know I should've told her, but it wasn't my secret to tell and—"

His Dad sighs as he comes to sit on the end of the couch.

“Have there been any other secrets you’ve kept from her that weren’t yours?”

Will frowns.

“No, I…I told her about Hannibal.”

“Everything about him?”

“Yeah.”

“Why didn’t you tell her about her girlfriend then? It wasn’t…”

He closes his eyes. “I don’t know, I just…I wanted her to be happy. I didn’t…I already messed things up for her before and didn’t want to do it again.”

“Did you tell her that, Son?”

Will looks at him. “No.”

“Maybe you should. I’m sure it couldn’t hurt.”

He nods. “I…I’ll try. Thanks, Dad.”

Michael pats his leg. “No problem, Kid. We all mess up sometimes, right? That’s what makes us human. Or I guess in your case half human?”

Will laughs and wipes his eyes. “Don’t remind me.”

“Ah,” he says, “Did it again, sorry.”

“It’s fine.”

He watches his Dad get up and head for the kitchen.

“Hey Dad?”

Michael turns. “Yeah?”

“I think from now on I’ll just tell myself I got all my human side from you.”

He smiles. “Sounds good to me. Now, call her up. Ok?”

“Ok.”

Will picks up his phone and presses Bev’s number. He waits, hoping, and is ready to leave a message when it picks up.

“Bev?”

There’s no response on the other end.

“Ok,” he says, “I…I know you hate me right now but I just…I know I fucked up. I should’ve told you first thing but I didn’t want to ruin things for you. You were *so happy* and I’d already…I took Abby from you. I didn’t want to take Chiyoh too. I just…you…you’re my best friend. All I want is…”

The call ends and he presses the phone to his face as tears flood his cheeks.

“ *Please,* ” he whispers, “I…”

The sound of a car outside makes him jump up off the couch and Hannibal comes through the door looking upset. “Will? What’s happened?”

He launches himself at Hannibal and breathes him in.

“She picked up and then she…”

Hannibal lifts him with ease and carries him to the couch.

“Maelisis, I’m sorry.”

“I just…”

Hannibal rubs his back. “Is there anything I can do? Anything at all?”

Will lifts his head and sighs. “Turn back time?”

He brushes the curls from Will’s face. “I wish I could, Will. I very much wish I could.”

They sit there, breathing each other in, and the phone drops from Will’s hand just as it starts to ring. He dives down to answer.

“Bev?”

“I…I saw her last night,” she says, her voice shaking, “And she left a purple mark on my hand. I cried when it started to fade. I…I don’t know what to do and I need…”

Will leans against Hannibal, who kisses his cheek.

“Hannibal did it to me too,” he whispers, “It…it’s because she thinks she’s losing you. It’s to keep other monsters away.”

Bev scoffs. “You mean there’s more?”

“Hannibal doesn’t think so.”

She’s quiet.

“Bev, I’m—“

“Did she find me first to get to you? Or…”

“No, we…we found her. Bev…”

“I’m so mad at you.”

“I know.”

“Like, colossally big mad.”

“Bev…”

“I gotta go, Will. I…thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

The call ends and he sighs, letting his phone fall to the floor as he cuddles closer to Hannibal.

“She hates me.”

He kisses Will’s mating bite. “No, she doesn’t.”

“She only called to ask me something not because she was ready to talk.”

“It’s a step forward, Will. A positive one.”

Will sighs.

“I guess. Tell me something good happened today about the house.”

“Work is still going well, and no problems have arisen.”

“That’s good I guess.”

Hannibal takes his hand and kisses it. “I wish I could take this sadness away from you, Will.”

“I know.”

“I suppose a trip into the lake wouldn’t be something you’d be interested in?”

Will lifts his head. “To the cave?”

Hannibal kisses his fingers. “Yes.”

“We’ll…”

“With the children.”

He freezes. “What?”

Hannibal turns his cheek. “They’re bigger now, Will. They can handle this.”

Will stands up fast.

“They’re barely a week old!”

“Will, our kind grow and develop much faster than human children. It’s not the same and you know it. They were swimming the minute they hatched.”

“Babies swim! It’s not…”

The babies all start to cry, one by one, and Will curses as his nipples leak.

“ *Damnit!* ”

Will goes to get Emma and Ethan, angry as Hannibal picks up the others. He opens his shirt and lays down as he purs them on him.

“Will…”

He feels tears fall down his cheeks. “I’m not ready,” he says, “I…I’m…they’ve barely been here and I can’t…no.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I apologize, Mielasis. I will not bring it up again.”

Will clutches Emma and Ethan.

“You…you can, just wait another week or two?”

“I will.”

The babies eat and they burp each one before all eight of them get in the pool together. It’s been ages since they’ve done this, far too long, and Will’s relief is instant.

They watch the children happily swim, keeping shift so easily already, and it’s the best Will’s felt all day.

“I hope you remembered the pool,” he says, smiling, “For the new house. Though I’m not sure how much better regular pool water would be for them.”

Hannibal nuzzles his neck, his scaly skin making Will shiver. “I’ve swam in pools and not been affected, but they were invented well after I was a child. I’m sure you did as a child at some point.”

Will frowns. “I don’t think so. Dad kinda kept me off of swimming.”

“Big tubs perhaps?”

Will smiles as he watches Emma and Ethan go under together. “Really big tubs.”

They sit for a while, long enough for him to doze, and when he wakes it’s because Hannibal is whispering in his ear. “Mielasis,” he whispers, “Someone is here to see you.”

Will opens his eyes slowly, trying to adjust, and freezes when he sees Bev sitting on the floor by the babies. She’s got red rimmed eyes, looks like she hasn’t eaten in days, and her smile doesn’t quite reach her eyes.

“Bev?”

She blinks back tears. “Will.”

He shifts back so fast he barely feels it, and stares at her in fear.

“You…you came.”

“Yeah, I…I needed something I could only get here.”

Will frowns. “What?”

Bev opens her arms and he jumps out of the water, running to hug her tight. She sniffles, and he buries his face against her neck. “I’m so sorry,” he repeats, “I’m so…”

“I know, Graham,” she whispers, kissing his cheek, “I know. Your…husband told me.”

Will looks up. “What?”

“Hannibal came by a couple of hours ago,” she says, “We talked a little, and he…he told me some stuff.”

He looks back at Hannibal. “You did?”

“You were quite soundly asleep, so I…thought it the best time.”

“Hannibal…”

“He’s a keeper,” she says, “I…I called Chiyoh we’re…going slow but…I’m thinking about that song again.”

Will looks at her and smiles. “Bev.”

“And she told me that if we do…get together…she might be able to knock me up so…maybe someday your kids can date my kids?”

He laughs and hugs her again.

“Bev, I…god I missed you so much.”

“I love you, Will, you know?”

“I love you too.”

They sit together, and watch the babies play as Will looks over at Hannibal who’s shifted back watching them with a smile on his face.

You didn’t have to do this.

Yes, I did.

I love you so much.

I love you more.

As he sits there with Bev he wonders if he can get any happier than he is right now.

Just wait.

Will looks at him and smiles as he whispers in Bev’s ear.

“What did he say to make you decide to come?”

She sighs.

“That you needed me just as much as I needed you and that…you only kept Chiyoh’s secret because you knew how much it devastated you when you found out about him.”

“That’s it?”

“Well,” she sighs, reaching out to touch baby Bev on the head as she swims by, “That and he threatened not to name any more babies after me, and honestly I know you’re gonna have like a hundred and there’s definitely gonna be a Beverly 2 in there somewhere.”

Will laughs and lays his head on her shoulder.

“Definitely.”

He looks at her hand.

“There are things I need to tell you,” he said, “Monster things.”

“Scary ones?”

“Yeah.”

“Bad ones?”

“Yeah.”

“Not today,” she says, hugging him closer, “Not today. Ok?”

Will smiles. “Ok.”

They’re happy for now.

But he will tell her the truth about monster marriage.

Even if it means he might lose her again.

Chapter 90

The splashing is what wakes Will out of a deep sleep, though later he's almost sure it was the connection he has with the babies.

Their night is rather uneventful after Bev leaves, and all the babies fall sound asleep peacefully in their bassinets. He expects them to sleep through the night again.

But that's not what happens.

He opens his eyes slowly, wiping them, and feels Hannibal stir behind him. "Will?"

"I hear…"

Will's eyes adjust to the darkness, and he hears laughing.

Babies laughing.

He turns on the light, confused, and hears feels Hannibal clutch him closer. "Will."

The babies, the oldest only twelve days old, have somehow gotten out of their bassinets and are in the water. He stares, wide eyed, as they swim together.

"They're not even two weeks old," he whispers, not sure whether to laugh or cry.

Hannibal kisses his cheek and he feels him smile. "Our kind grows much faster than normal."

“But…”

“They were already quite big for their age, Will. I imagine they’re the equivalent of months old instead of days.”

“But this…they climbed out of their bassinets! They…”

Hannibal nuzzles his cheek. “They have tentacles, and senses other children would not normally have. My sister spoke when she was only a month old.”

Will blinks back tears as he watches Ethan and Emma playing together.

“How are we…I mean…Hannibal they’re not normal. We can’t just tell people they were just born.”

“Yes, I know.”

“So…”

“I have the paperwork ready to be drawn up to name them your children, and when we’re sure they’ve slowed growth we can show them to others. Though I suspect that may take a very long time.”

Will sighs and gets up off the couch, shifting as he gets into the pool. The babies all come closer to him, and he throws one of the pool toys his Dad bought them what feels so long ago toward Dylan.

“It’s four a.m. tadpoles,” he says, “You scared the shit outta me.”

Sebastian swims over to him, and swipes the toy from Dylan with his tentacle. Dylan starts to cry and Will picks him up to hold. “Shhh…it’s ok little man.”

He feels Hannibal climb in beside him, and they both sigh as Will brings Dylan to nurse.

“They’ll do just fine, Will. Don’t worry.”

Will sighs. “I just…they won’t be little for as long as I thought.”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “Perhaps not, but…they may not be the last children we have.”

Will smiles.

“We’ll probably need a bigger house.”

“I’m working on that.”

Will falls asleep again as he nurses Dylan, and wakes to his Dad talking to Hannibal from the open dining room door. The children are back in their bassinets and he’s still in the water, but slept pretty well considering. He gets up, grabs a towel, and walks into the dining room to sit with them.

“Hey.”

“Good morning, Son. Hannibal says you slept better in the pool than you have on that little couch.”

“Yeah,” he says, grabbing some bacon as a sudden hunger overtakes him, “I don’t even remember falling asleep.”

Hannibal hands him some juice, and he sucks it down so fast he drinks two more glasses. He feels oddly sweaty, and wipes his forehead. “Will?”

“I feel…weird.”

He reaches out to touch Will’s forehead and frowns. “You’re burning up.”

“He doesn’t get sick,” his Dad says, “Not ever.”

Will grabs Hannibal’s arm and sighs. “Feels better when you touch me.”

Hannibal breathes in deeply and Will watches his eyes turn red.

“Will…”

“Uh, is something the matter?”

Hannibal leans in and kisses Will’s forehead.

What do you need, Mielasis?

I don’t know, I just…I need you.

He looks at Michael. “I think perhaps Will and I need some time away.”

His father blinks. “Um…how much time?”

“A few days perhaps?”

“I…uh…you said the grandmonsters are climbing around now, and I dunno…”

“We can call Beverly and Chiyoh to perhaps help,” Hannibal says, as Will all but hugs his arm, “They’re still on shaky ground but Chiyoh would be helpful as she is of the sea herself.”

“I guess that’s alright.”

Will whimpers, getting up, and before he can stop himself he’s in Hannibal’s lap. Hannibal kisses his cheek and he hears his Dad groan.

“I’m gonna leave you to…this, just…let me know when you leave.”

He’s so hot, aching, and his backside feels wetter than usual. “Hannibal…”

Hannibal kisses Will’s cheek and presses his lips to Will’s ear. “I think perhaps you’ve entered a fertile cycle.”

Will frowns. “What?”

“The children displayed much growth last night, Will, and your body is eager to have more.”

He wiggles in Hannibal’s lap. “But…that never…”

“You never carried eggs before them, so you would not have gone through it till now.”

Will presses his face against Hannibal's neck and breaths in deep, moaning at his scent.

"You smell so good."

Hannibal licks the sweat from his temple. "I can taste your want, your…readiness…it's intoxicating."

Will sighs. "I…"

"I'm unsure of how long it'll last, perhaps a day or days, but your need will make things difficult. We need to be alone, even if we…don't decide to conceive."

Will feels tears fill his eyes. "You don't want to fill me up? I…I'm sorry I didn't…I…I TRIED TO SAVE THEM!"

Hannibal touches his cheeks, shaking his head. "No, no, Mielasis. No."

He can't see through his tears. "I tried to make her kill me instead, Hannibal, I swear I did! I…"

Hannibal kisses him hard, swallowing Will's sobs, and before he can even let out another he's lifted onto the table as Hannibal shoves his tongue inside him. Will groans, nearly shouting, before Hannibal lifts his head.

"I need you to cover your mouth for me, Will. Do not let the babies get upset by your sounds."

"But…"

“Please, Mielasis. For me?”

“But I want…”

“Not here, Will. I will take you, but not here. Not until I can hear you fully.”

Will covers his mouth then, shuddering as Hannibal starts to tongue fuck him again, and before he can stop himself he’s shifting digging his nails across the wood table as he comes. He nearly bites his fingers, fangs glazing his webbed hands, and when he’s pulled up into a kiss he reaches for Hannibal’s pants, shoving his hand inside. Hannibal shudders, arching up into his touch, and comes spilling wet against his fingers. Will bites his tongue, satisfied for now, and they part, staring down at each other in wonder.

“Will…are you more coherent?”

“Y…yeah.”

“I apologize if…I didn’t mean to upset you. I…”

He reaches for Hannibal’s cheek. “You didn’t, I just…god this is gonna be an embarrassing couple of days.”

“Is it?”

Will sighs. “I…I mean…”

“I want you to think about what you want, Mielasis. I am content with whatever path you decide to choose.”

He feels tears fill his eyes. “I know.”

Hannibal kisses his tears and nuzzles his cheek. “I will call Beverly and Chiyoh. You need to fix yourself, perhaps shower, and then pack a bag.”

“Okay.”

He leaves Will, helping him stand, and Will fixes himself up with shaky hands.

The thought of what might happen in the next few days, or even the next few hours brings sudden flashbacks that he pushes away as he heads for the shower. Cold water helps, though not much, and he finds himself jerking off against the tile to thoughts of Hannibal filling him with eggs again.

His pregnancy the first time had been filled with worry, confusion, and ultimately terror. He knows if he decides to have more things would be different for sure, but still he can’t stop the thoughts in his head even as tries to wash them away.

Will gets dressed still worrying, filling his bag and sitting down when he starts to sweat again.

“Fuck,” he mumbles, wiping his face.

Can he handle the next few days like this without begging to be bred?

Will is already rock hard by the time he puts on his shoes, and a knock gives him pause as Bev sticks her head into the room.

“Shit, he really wasn’t lying that you’re in monster heat.”

He laughs, wiping his forehead. “Shut up.”

She sits down next to him, and he can’t bring himself to touch her. “Mom said I can stay, though she has no idea Chiyoh is here so shh.”

Will sighs. “You sure you’re ok with this? Being around her for that long?”

“Your dad is a good buffer, and the kids will deter any stupid ideas.”

“No, I mean…you’re still…”

Bev frowns. “I’m ok, Graham. Really. I’m more worried about you. Are you…I mean…are you gonna…”

Will wipes his face again, and wiggles on the bed. “I don’t know.”

“Hannibal is okay with not…jump starting the football team?”

Will smiles. “Yeah, he’ll still help me.”

“At last you’ll have fun.”

He sighs. “I…I think we need to go…it’s getting harder.”

Bev wiggles her eyebrows. “That’s what he said.”

Will laughs. “Bev…”

“C’mon, let’s get you outta here.”

Will stands on shaky legs, grabbing his bag, and finds the babies all still asleep while Hannibal is talking with his Dad.

“So we’ve got enough milk for at least two days,” his Dad says, “And if we need more Hannibal says you’ll pump. He put it in the car.”

Will nods, shaking so badly he can hardly stand. “Oh…kay.”

“I think we need to leave.”

“Oh..yeah, I…good luck? Do you say good luck?”

Bev pats his Dad’s shoulder. “How about drive safe?”

“Yeah, that!”

Will barely is paying attention as they get outside, and the minute Hannibal gets into the car he’s on him. Hannibal kisses him hard, biting his lip, and shoves his hand down the back of Will’s pants.

“Hannibal…”

“Shhh…”

He fingers Will fast, not stopping, and Will groans. “Please, please, please…”

“Not here, Will, not yet.”

He’s in tears when he comes, pants already down but spilling across Hannibal’s nice shirt. Will lays his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, shaking, and he kisses his mating bite.

“Fuck, this is hard.”

“Yes, but you smell heavenly.”

Will smiles. “Yeah, well…that doesn’t help me much.”

“It’s going to be a bit of drive,” Hannibal says, “I apologize, but…perhaps…”

Will sits down, putting on his belt, and leans against Hannibal’s shoulder. “You want to do your sleep thing?”

“Yes, if you’re not averse.”

He sighs. “Yeah, I think it’s a good idea.”

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “Rest well, Mielasis. I will wake you when we’re in the hotel room.”

Will falls asleep before he can even reply, and wakes up to Hannibal whispering in his ear.

“Wake up, Will.”

He opens his eyes, and is sweating so badly he can hardly see.

“Hannibal…”

“Do you know where we are, Will?”

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal grabs his cock and starts to stroke, making Will whimper. “We’re in the same hotel room where we first conceived,” he whispers, “I thought it apt, even if we don’t this time it… this will be a better memory.”

Will groans, biting his lip as he kisses him, and when he comes it’s with a sob.

It’s not enough.

“I don’t…god it’s…”

Hannibal wipes a wet washcloth across Will’s forehead. “I apologize, Will, but I need your answer. What do you want?”

Will shivers, grabbing his wrist.

“It wasn’t just where I got pregnant,” he whispers, “It was my first time.”

“Yes, I know.”

“And I…I didn’t get to see anything.”

“Will…”

He licks Hannibal’s wrist and feels him tremble. “I want to see you,” he whispers, “I want to…feel it all.”

“I haven’t hidden from you for a very long time.”

“I know,” Will says, “But…I…I want to see it here, I want…to feel it when you…get me pregnant again.”

Hannibal’s eyes turn red and his skin is bright blue as Will watches him shift.

“Mielasis, we don’t….Will I can pleasure you as best I can. I promise you that. We…”

Will kisses him softly, sighing as he smells Hannibal’s arousal and feels how happy he is through their bond.

“I want to, Hannibal. I…I want to, so much. I…I…”

Hannibal touches his cheeks, shifting back again, and Will stares up into the face of the man he fell in love with so easily only months ago.

The father of his children.

His other half.

“Tell me, Will. Tell me what you want.”

Will blinks back tears. “I want you to breed me, Hannibal. I…oh god please that’s all I want. I…”

Hannibal kisses him hard then, biting, and Will feels the warmth rush through his entire body.

The next few days will be like nothing he’s ever felt before but he knows how it will end.

His body is ready

And he can’t wait.

Chapter 91

The desperate heat that rises as Will watches Hannibal drop his shift makes him do the same, and he realizes with a whimper that he's still got clothes on.

"Hannibal," he sighs, "I…I can't wait, I…"

He kisses Will's forehead and smiles.

"I will not make you wait any longer, I promise."

Hannibal peels down everything below his waist with inhuman quickness, tossing them over his shoulder, and Will himself sits up to pull off the rest. He's completely naked as Hannibal moves to take off his own shirt, using little care as it all but rips at the seams, and Will's so wet he can feel it crawl up his back.

"I remember how desperately I wanted to see you face the last time we were here," he says, opening his trousers, "How much I reveled in the noises you made because it was all I had."

"I…I just remember everything feeling much bigger and longer than it should have," Will laughs, sweat starting to form on his skin, "I was so stupid."

Hannibal peels off his briefs, exposing his cock, and Will opens his legs as he crawls back on the bed. His tail moves as he gets closer, and Will trembles as it grazes his leg.

"Not stupid," Hannibal whispers, grabbing hold of Will's hips as he licks his belly, "Never."

"Hannibal…"

He licks down, his long tongue tasting every scale on Will's skin, and when he grasps Will's cock he lets out a sob. "Please, please, pl…"

Hannibal's tentacles brush Will's ankles as he licks a lie up his neck. "My perfect Will," he whispers, "So perfect…"

Will reaches for his tentacles, whimpering as they brush his wet willing hole, and when they brush his backside he cries out.

"You make me so happy," he whispers, "Do you know that?"

"You…you make me happy too…so…"

Hannibal bites down and Will moans as another gush of wetness slides out of him.

"I can smell your want, so…it's…I feel privileged to know it's for me. No one else can see you this way, or know the beauty of your desperate need."

"Hannibal…."

His tentacles slip inside Will and he sobs, arching up to meet them, and Hannibal kisses down his chest. Will can't stop shaking, and he can feel how much Hannibal wants him.

"The first time," Hannibal says, "Was a revelation, a connection, the start of our union. This…will be a…"

"Rebirth," Will whispers, tears filling his eyes.

"No," Hannibal whispers, kissing his belly, "It's not a rebirth…it's…another chapter of a story that will never end.

Will grips his hair as his tentacles thrust inside, and he groans. “Hannibal…I…please…”

He lifts Will’s legs at once, and shoves his long tongue inside as his tentacles leave. Will cries out, rocking against his face, and Hannibal’s deep growls make him reach for his cock but the tentacles grab hold of his arms.

“Noooo…”

Hannibal licks, gorging on his wetness like a wild animal, and Will feels like he’s gonna come soon until a tentacle wraps around his cock.

He lifts his head.

“Not yet.”

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal kisses Will’s inner thighs, and up his legs until he lifts them. Will’s tail hits his hip and he caresses it softly while staring into Will’s eyes.

“I’ve never seen anyone look so beautiful in all my life.”

Will groans. “Fuck me,” he repeats as through red vision, “Fuck me, fuck me, f—”

He lifts Will’s legs up onto his shoulders and thrusts in at once making him hiss so loudly it seems to echo off the walls. Hannibal’s razor sharp teeth nip at Will’s ankles, and he smiles.

“Are you ready, Mielasis?”

“Oh god, just…”

Hannibal starts to fuck him in earnest, the bed shaking as they growl at one another, and Will grips his neck nearly bending himself in half but doesn’t feel a thing. “Mine…”

“Yesss,” Hannibal hisses, “All yours, Will. Always yours.”

They roll, every undulation better than the last, and their growls and moans are the only sounds until Will bites into Hannibal’s neck hard. He shudders as he feels Hannibal come inside him, filling him with what he needs one by one, and they roll again as Hannibal reaches for his cock.

He shoves their mouths together, their teeth clashing as Will feels blood on his tongue, and when he finally comes he feels it like a red hot heat throughout his body. The pleasure echoes between them as he hears Hannibal hum against his cheek, stroking him through every last shiver of pleasure until they subside.

Hannibal bites down on his neck softly, and Will feels tears fall down his cheeks.

“Perfect.”

He smiles. “It was,” he whispers, “Do you think…”

Hannibal kisses the bites he made, and up Will’s cheek to whisper in his ear. “Time will tell, but…I can’t imagine it will take very long.”

Will smiles as he struggles to keep his eyes open.

“We’re about to get that football team.”

Hannibal nuzzles his cheek. “Yes, we are.”

He falls asleep smiling, wrapped in Hannibal’s embrace, and expects not to open his eyes again till Hannibal wakes him. The shock of heat that comes to throw him out of sleep is startling, and Hannibal is already there waiting to turn him on his side.

“Oh god…it…”

“Shhh…”

Hannibal thrusts inside him slowly, the feel of being filled exactly what he needs, and every time he pulls out to thrust back inside makes him whimper.

“I thought…I was so sure…”

He kisses Will’s healing bite, and nuzzles his neck. “Perhaps it’s not time yet, Will. There’s no rush, just…feel me inside you. Feel how much I want you, how much I love you…”

Tears fall down Will’s face as his slow thrusts seem to hit his inner pleasure over and over; and the sound of humming makes Will join right along. Their music makes him calmer, the pleasure of his orgasm coming at a rush this time, and he’s trembling as Hannibal fills him again moments later as Will’s wetness seems to never end.

“Better?”

“Mmm…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I will order us room service.”

“Fish?”

He smiles against Will’s cheek as he pulls out, kissing him. “If you’d like that, yes. Anything else?”

“Pizza.”

They both pause.

Pizza had been one of the few things he could eat without feeling sick when he had the eggs.

Hannibal turns Will’s cheek and smiles at him. “That sounds perfect.”

Will rolls onto his back with a sigh, and shifts back human as stares up at the ceiling with a hand on his belly. He could be carrying eggs inside him, how many he didn’t know, but he smiles as he thinks about their house full of sweet little sea monster babies.

“...yes, thank you.”

Hannibal sets down the phone and lays back down, pulling Will closer.

“Do you wish to shower? I can call you when the food is here.”

“I probably should, huh?”

“You don’t have to, Will.”

“I know, I just,” he sits up and sighs, “I’ll go take a shower and…just tell me when the food is here?”

“Of course.”

Will drags himself to the shower, turning it on, and smiles as he keeps a hand on his belly. He imagines it swollen again as he holds the eggs inside him, and tears well up in his eyes.

“I’ll take care of you, I promise,” he whispers, rubbing.

He gets into the shower with a sigh, washing off what remains of their rigorous lovemaking, and puts shampoo in his hair while he relaxes.

This whole thing had been a surprise, but a welcome one.

They needed this time away, even for a few days.

He moves to grab the soap and suddenly his knees go out from under him as he’s hit with another wave of heat.

“No, no, no…”

Will clutches the wall, shaking, and rips open the shower door just as Hannibal runs into the bathroom naked. He turns him to the wall and thrusts inside, humming in Will’s ear as his relentless pace makes it hard for Will to cry.

“I’m sorry,” Will gasps, “I…”

Hannibal kisses him hard, cutting off any reply, and grasps Will's cock as he seems to never stop. Will clutches him, dropping shift, and Hannibal's nails dig into Will's hips as he growls.

"More, more, mor…"

He comes with a groan, filling Will up fast, and bites down on Will's neck as the pleasure echoes between them and Will's orgasm makes him spill against the shower tiles. Hannibal holds him, the spray covering them both, and Will's tears won't stop falling.

"What if I can't?" he whispers, "What if she…"

Hannibal kisses his cheeks, not pulling out again, and Will rocks back against his softening cock. "Even if that's the case, Mielasis? It wouldn't be your fault, and I wouldn't love you any less."

Will sobs, and Hannibal pulls out to take him into his arms. They lean against the wall, and he can't stop crying as Hannibal rubs his back.

"I just…I want to forget…but I…I don't want to forget *them* ."

Hannibal holds him tighter. "You never will."

Will doesn't know how long they stay there, but the sound of a knock on the door makes Hannibal lift him up with ease carrying him out still wet to the bed. He crawls under the comforter, covering his head, and listens as Hannibal speaks to the man at the door.

He can smell the food, but makes no move to lift the covers off.

“Will?”

“I’m not hungry.”

Will feels Hannibal’s sadness through their bond and hates himself for being the cause.

“Please let me see you.”

He lifts off the comforter, wiping his eyes, and Hannibal brings over a dish. Will can smell the fish, and his stomach growls.

“I think you are hungry.”

“Hannibal, I just…”

He brings the breaded fish to Will’s mouth and he bites down, chewing as he stares into his eyes, and Hannibal takes the next bite. Will hums, biting again, and they take turns until the entire thing is gone. Will kisses him softly after, humming louder now, and Hannibal smiles as they part.

“Better?”

“You can’t just let me be sad?”

“Not tonight.”

The pizza is different, mostly for Will, but tastes better with every bite. Will doesn’t try to think this time he’s pregnant, not like the last two, and leaves two pieces before he falls back onto the bed.

“I’m stuffed.”

Hannibal lays down beside Will and pulls him in slowly, kissing his cheek. “Good.”

He smiles.

“I wonder how they’re doing back at home,” he laughs, “The kids are for sure not making it easy on them.”

Hannibal smiles. “I’m sure they’re not, but your father and Beverly know what they’re doing.”

“Chiyoh can supervise,” Will says, laughing.

“She wants to know,” Hannibal says, “I’m sure she does. I wouldn’t worry about her either.”

Will sighs, and feels Hannibal’s hand come down to his belly. He tenses up, and takes his hand in his. “What now?”

“We can watch something, if you’d like, or just wait.”

He closes his eyes. “I don’t know if I want to just wait, I mean…”

“Will, you can’t think any less of yourself that it’s not happening instantly. It takes both of us to make children.”

Will looks back at him and frowns. “I’m sure it’s not you, it…”

Hannibal touches his cheek. “Why would it not be me? I’m much older than you are, and perhaps my eggs are past their prime.”

“NO!” Will says, climbing up to straddle him, “You…NO! Hannibal…”

He frowns up at him. “You can’t think it’s just you, Mielasis, and I won’t think it’s just me. Yes?”

Will sighs. “Ok.”

He pulls him down again and Will relaxes as he feels Hannibal touch his belly.

“I love you, Will.”

Will takes his hand and entwines their fingers. “I love you, Hannibal.”

He feels his eyes grow heavy again and sighs. “I’ll see you soon, I guess?”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Perhaps not. Rest, Will.”

Will drifts, listening to Hannibal’s heart against his ear, and when he finally feels like he’s about to fall asleep it comes again in the dark. He groans, arching back against Hannibal’s cock as he feels Hannibal hard against him.

“It’s never gonna stop,” he hisses, “I’m b…”

Hannibal rolls him onto his back and puts a hand over his mouth.

“You will not say terrible things about yourself in front of me, Will. Do you hear me?”

Will feels tears run down his cheeks and doesn’t say a word, nodding.

“This is a natural progression, and…we’ll treat it as such. The more you let yourself worry the harder it will be. Do you understand? Embrace the want, Will. Fall into the desire, the passion, the *need* . The eggs need my seed, but they also need you to carry them. They need you to be calm, ready, and willing.”

He lets out a sob as Hannibal takes his hand away, and turns on the light.

“I’m sorry.”

Hannibal sighs. “I know, Will. I know.”

“I just…I am willing, I…I don’t…I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

He kisses him softly, and rolls onto his back. “There’s nothing wrong with you, Mielasis. Just take what you need, Will. Please, let me see you. All I want is to see you.”

Will climbs on top of him, shaking, and Hannibal moves into position just as he sinks down onto his cock. He hums, throwing back his head, and soon begins riding the waves of want and desire that seem to never end. Hannibal kisses him, hands on his cheek as he drops shift, and Will is shaking with desire as he feels Hannibal’s tentacles grasp his cock.

Embrace it, love it, fall into the need.

He moans, lost in the amazing rush of want, and has tears in his eyes as Hannibal thrusts up against every undulation. Will groans when Hannibal bites down onto his neck, biting back, and still needs more quickening his pace as Hannibal's cock hits his inner pleasure over and over again.

Hannibal comes first, groaning as he fills him, and Will's vision is red as he kisses him still riding through his orgasm till the tentacles go so fast he can't help but cry out spilling between them. He smashes his mouth against Hannibal's, biting his lip, and the taste of blood fills him with a hot heat that seems to build until his whole body feels different.

He falls down onto Hannibal, shaking, and they hold each other close, not moving.

Will smiles. "I…I feel different," he whispers, "I…I feel them."

"Will, you can't be sure as of yet. We've only just finished, I don't want you to be upset if they need to be fertilized once more, and haven't taken hold."

He clutches Hannibal's neck as tears fill his eyes, and puts Hannibal's hand on his belly.

"I *feel* them, Hannibal. I.." he laughs, "I know they're there. I just know."

Hannibal kisses his cheek, and hums against his ear. He sniffs Will's neck, and sighs.

"You smell sweet. Will…"

He lets out a sob, clutching him, and Hannibal clutches him.

"I love you."

Hannibal kisses his forehead. “I live and breathe for you, Will.”

Will hums, nuzzling his neck. “Mine.”

“All yours, Hannibal whispers, his voice thick with emotion, “Always and forever.”

His stomach suddenly growls, and rolls onto his back with a sigh. “I think I’ll have that pizza now.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “As you wish, and I will order some more.”

As he watches Hannibal get up off the bed Will rubs his belly, and whispers to the tadpoles.

“See, he loves you already.”

Chapter 92

The pizza comes faster than Will expects, and he ends up eating almost one full one on his own which only makes Hannibal smile more.

"What?"

He shakes his head. "Nothing, it's…I had to step back just weeks ago when you were carrying the children and now I can be fully immersed in it. I disliked keeping everything to myself, knowing how confused you were but…"

Will puts a hand over his where they sit across from one another on the bed, still naked, and entwines their fingers.

"You wanted me to confide in you," Will says, "It was a shit move, leaving me in the dark like that, but I understand it."

"I was selfish."

"Yeah, but I understand now that we're bonded. I understand *you* more than I ever did then."

Hannibal sighs, and picks at the two pieces on his plate. "I'm thankful for that, but it still feels like I need to apologize."

Will smiles. "You have, plenty of times over," he whispers, taking his hand and putting it on his belly, "And now you get to be openly freaked out about me being full up of tiny little eggs already growing every minute we sit here."

Hannibal rubs his belly. "Will…"

“And we’re gonna need more room for all of them. I,” he laughs, “I think we’ll have to stick around the other house for a bit longer but…we’ll be ok.”

Hannibal leans down and kisses his belly softly before looking up at him. “We will be more than ok, Mielasis. I will make you so happy.”

Will kisses him and sighs. “You already do.”

“You make me very happy too, Will, all of you.”

He smiles and kisses him again. “And you wonder why I forgave you, I…I don’t think I could be this happy with anyone else.”

“And I’m thankful for that,” Hannibal teases, “I would have to murder anyone who tried to take you away.”

“You already did, remember?”

“I will not forget.”

Will pulls him up under his arms and hugs him tight.

“Should we go home? I mean…”

Hannibal nuzzles his neck. “We can spend another night, I’m sure the children are fine and… we haven’t been alone in quite some time.”

Will sighs, turning to pick up the slice off Hannibal’s plate holding it out for him. He takes a bite, and Will smiles.

“True,” he says, watching Hannibal eat, “And I’m sure there’s gotta be something on we can watch. Just like old times.”

Hannibal smiles, pulling Will down onto the bed before he grabs the remote.

“Let’s see.”

They end up finding a new horror movie about sea monsters called Sea Slaughter, and Will hand feeds Hannibal two pieces of pizza before they move the rest to the floor.

“The monster work on this film is very subpar,” Hannibal murmurs, rubbing Will’s side as they lay, “You said this was in theaters?”

“According to my phone, yeah. Some people don’t care about stuff like that.”

“I suppose if they haven’t seen the real thing, this is frightening to them.”

Will smiles. “Some people also just…like it. I mean, in a not scary way.”

“You mean sexually?”

He laughs. “Yes.”

“Hmm,” Hannibal sighs, lying his head on Will’s shoulder, “Did *you* ever have that type of… reaction…to a sea monster on screen?”

“No,” Will smiles, “I never really had any kind of *reaction* like that at all till you.”

“Good.”

“Now you don’t have to kill an innocent actor somewhere?”

“Yes.”

He laughs. “Territorial shouldn’t do it for me, but,” he takes Hannibal’s hand, “It really does.”

“Will…”

Will sighs, suddenly feeling warm again but not like before.

“It’s not a heat,” he says, “Before you say it might be.”

“Your heat is long passed, Mielasis,” Hannibal whispers, pressing his already hard cock to Will’s backside, “I know the difference between the types of your arousal.”

“Hannibal…”

“Are you aroused thinking of me murdering someone to keep you?”

“Y…yeah,” Will says, “I…I…”

Hannibal nips at his neck and he moans. “You realize I have done it already? Matthew, Garrett, Molly…and *her.”*

“Hannibal,” Will whimpers, “Just…”

He presses into Will slowly, and Will feels the wetness inside him gush out as he starts to move.

“There was no way this could’ve ended differently,” Hannibal growls, taking Will’s cock in hand as they lay there side by side, “I would’ve waited eons for your trust…your…love…and never let you go.”

“Oh god,” Will purrs, “I love you so much, don’t…”

He moves faster, growling as he drops shift, and his tentacles take the place of his hand as Will cries out the force of their strokes almost too much.

“Would you have done the same, Will?”

Will drops shift, hissing. “Yes, yes, mine, Hannibal…”

He bites him hard, drawing blood, and Will comes in a rush the pleasure echoing back between them as he feels Hannibal fill him once again. Will rocks back against his cock as he still moves, growling and digging claws into his arm while waves of pleasure are shared.

Hannibal licks his bite as they settle, and Will leans back to smile at him with sharp pointed teeth.

“We’ll do it again,” he whispers, “Won’t we?”

The question doesn’t need an explanation, and Hannibal’s claws brush his blue skin.

“You wish to?”

“I think so, yeah,” he says, “I…it’s…in our nature, isn’t it?”

“Will…”

“When they’re older,” he says, kissing him, “When…it’s safe.”

Hannibal shifts back, still inside him, and places a hand on Will’s blue belly. “All you need to do is tell me when, Mielasis. That’s all.”

Will smiles. “Ok.”

They lay there, basking in the afterglow, and hear a scream from the TV looking up as the sea monster attacks a blonde lifeguard. Will licks his lips, taking Hannibal’s hand as he shifts back.

“Do you think that’s why I like horror movies so much? That I…just liked watching them all die?”

“Perhaps.”

“Makes sense,” Will sighs, his eyes suddenly feeling heavy, “I’ve never really found anyone other than Bev and you who like it as much as I do.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Perhaps there’s a bit of a monster inside her as well.”

Will smiles. “I can’t wait to tell her.”

“I await her response.”

He drifts off as he watches the body of the blonde get dragged on shore, and wakes wet.

“Hannibal?”

“I apologize, Will,” Hannibal whispers, “It’s been hours since we’ve been wet, and with the eggs I thought you may need it.”

Will sighs, feeling the water around him. “Yeah, I did.”

Hannibal wipes a washcloth across his skin and he feels better than he has all day.

“Did you call home?”

“Yes, everything is fine. The children grew a bit, according to your father, but Beverly says they did not. Though they are now finding it difficult to keep them in their bassinets.”

“We’re gonna need cribs, you think?”

“Yes, I’ve already ordered them.”

Will smiles. “Of course you have.”

Hannibal kisses his neck and he says, leaning back against him.

“And they’ve got milk? I can…”

“They’re fine, Will,” he whispers, “Just fine.”

“Okay,” Will sighs, “I just…I want to be sure.”

“I know.”

Hannibal washes him off slowly as Will drifts again, and closes his eyes as he kisses his cheek.

“You may sleep, if you like.”

“No, I…I’m ok.”

“Will…”

“I am getting hungry again,” Will mumbles, “Is there still pizza?”

“Yes, but it’s quite cold.”

“I don’t mind.”

“We can have some after the bath.”

He sighs. “Ok.”

They finish the bath fast, though Will feels a little boneless, and he settles back in their bed while Hannibal gives him the last of the pizza. He eats it fast, feeling hungrier by the minute, and hugs Hannibal when he picks up to order more food and drink.

“You’re so good to me.”

“Always.”

He eats half of the new sausage and pepperoni they bring, and falls asleep while Hannibal rubs his back.

Will wakes up to Hannibal kissing down his chest, trembling as he feels milk leak out from his nipples. “Hannibal…”

“Shhh…”

He sucks, making Will whimper pulling his hair.

“Oh fuck, you…you’re gonna ruin feeding for me if you don’t stop.”

Hannibal lifts his head. “Do you really wish me to?”

Will blushes. “No, I…don’t stop.”

He sucks them one by one, moving down until he begins to lick at Will’s cock again. Will comes so fast he’s dizzy, gripping his hair, and Hannibal moves up to kiss him.

“Good morning.”

“A *very* good morning,” Will laughs, “Do you…are…”

“Do you wish for me to fuck you, Will?”

“You know I do,” Will whispers, feeling wetness already soaking the bed under him, “You started this.”

Hannibal smiles. “Tell me.”

“You’re a monster,” Will groans.

“Yes, I am.”

“Fuck me now, or I’m gonna go find someone who will.”

Hannibal growls, turning him onto his side before thrusting in hard. Will hums, desperate to hear Hannibal join in, and when he does Will’s eyes fill with tears.

“Will…”

They get louder, the sound of their song only fueling their need, and when Will comes again it’s with Hannibal’s lips at his ear while he strokes him with his hand. “We will feast again, Mielasis,” he hisses, “We will feast again.”

Hannibal comes when Will grabs his arm, biting down wherever he can, and the scent of his seed in the air makes Will’s whole body settle as he sighs.

“We’re gonna have so many kids,” he says, smiling, “Two, three football teams.”

Hannibal smiles.

“Is that what you want?”

“I want this, always this, for as long as we can have it.”

He kisses WIll’s cheek, taking his hand, and Will watches as his shift changes his fingers as they touch.

“We’ll live a very long time, WIll,” he growls, “And our children will grow and settle down themselves. We can do this for as long as we possibly can.”

Will smiles, dropping shift, and Hannibal’s tentacles brush his sides.

“I love you.”

“I love you.”

He grips Hannibal’s hand tighter as he sighs.

“I still remember,” Will whispers, “The first time I saw you and….I was struck.”

“I remember.”

“If I’d known then, what I know now,” Will says, his voice shaking, “I would’ve taken your hand and jumped into the nearest body of water.”

Hannibal lays his cheek to Will’s.

“We’re together now, Will,” he whispers, “That’s all that matters.”

Will closes his eyes.

“It does,” he says, “It really, really does.”

Chapter 93

“We have to go home,” Will sighs, just hours later, as darkness falls and they’re laying in bed once again.

“I’m certain everything is fine, Will. I called just hours ago and they told me the children are fine. Beverly even sounded in good spirits.”

Will leans back against him, breathing in Hannibal’s scent, and the hand on his belly is such a comfort he almost wishes they never had to leave.

“You know we can’t stay away forever.”

“I didn’t want to stay forever, I just…”

Will turns in his arms, and Hannibal frowns as he touches his cheek. “We’ll have other time,” he says, “But for now I need to go back. I just…I need it.”

“Do you feel something is wrong?”

He shakes his head. “No, I just…I want all my babies to be together.”

Hannibal smiles, kissing him again.

“As you wish, but…would it be amiss if we indulged just once more before heading back to the couch again?”

Will grins. “No.”

“Perhaps the tub? Or the shower?”

Will drops shift, and leans in to lick his cheek. “Yessss,” he sighs, “Please?”

Hannibal kisses him softly, the brush of his human skin making Will oddly aroused, and when they pull apart he’s wet without much touch at all.

“I will start the water.”

He gets up, leaving him, and Will rolls onto his back with a sigh. He reaches down to touch at his wetness, moaning, and hears the water start from the bathroom.

“Fuck,” he sighs, “Hannibal…H….”

Hannibal returns, super fast, and stares down at him on the bed with a smile.

“You’re so beautiful when you’re this eager,” he whispers, touching Will’s scaled cheek, “And you smell divine.”

Will pulls him down again, biting at his lips, and Hannibal lets him with a happy growl that seems to come out of nowhere. Will feels him drop shift, shaking, and he pulls back again.

“I do believe we should have a bath.”

“I…”

“It’s the closest we’ll get to the lake,” he says, “For now.”

Will nods, sitting up, and together they head into the bathroom. Hannibal sits down first, his tail knocking over some complimentary shampoos, and he pulls Will down splashing water on the tile floor.

"We're too big," Will laughs, kissing him again.

"Then perhaps," he says, "We need to improvise."

"How?"

"I've never stayed in half shift for very long, but…I'm certain it's possible if done correctly."

Will blinks. "Half shift? So like…no tails or just shifted feet and hands?"

"However you can make it happen."

Will licks his lips. "Concentrating that long would take away from the fun, wouldn't it?"

"Then what do you suppose we do about this predicament?"

Will shifts, sighing as he watches Hannibal do the same.

"The old fashioned way?"

Hannibal smiles as he touches his cheek, and Will settles down slowly on his cock groaning as he's filled. "I suppose this is fine too."

Will leans in and licks his cheek, pressing his lips to Hannibal's ear. "Fuck me," he whispers, "Now."

Hannibal thrusts up, and the water splashes again as Will sighs. He presses their mouths together, the feel of Hannibal's teeth as they struggle to stay human making him even more aroused. He feels tentacles brush his sides, and reaches out for them, pulling his mouth back as he kisses down Hannibal's neck.

"I want to feel them," he whimpers, "Please?"

"Will…"

The tentacles wrap around his cock tight, stroking Will so fast he's dizzy with desire, and when he feels Hannibal's teeth in his neck he cries out coming so hard his vision turns red. Hannibal keeps going, licking the mark he made, and Will pulls at his hair gasping for breath.

"Don't stop, don't stop, don't…"

Hannibal growls, the sound echoing off the walls, and Will can't help but bite down in return on his shoulder. He feels him come inside him at the bite, spilling and filling him just the way he wants, and starts to hum happily.

He hears Hannibal hum, licking down his neck again, and Will stays there feeling the tentacles still brush at his sides.

"Mmmm," he sighs, "We're good at that."

"Yes, we are."

He smiles.

“Now we need a bath all over again.”

Hannibal kisses his neck softly and lifts his head up to smile at him.

“There’s always the shower.”

They both turn and see the shower across the bathroom.

Will sighs. “But it’s so far away.”

“I can carry you.”

“But…”

Hannibal stands, lifting Will as he goes, and together they head for the very large shower. He settles Will down slowly before turning on the water that instantly heats. “Better?”

“Yeah.”

They wash each other, slowly taking turns running hands and washcloths over their skin, and when they leave the bathroom Will is exhausted. He falls into the bed with a sigh, and shifts closing his eyes.

“Do you want me to get more pizza or are you content?”

Will shakes his head. “I’m good, just…lay with me?”

Hannibal does just that, climbing in behind him, and together they lay until Will falls asleep once more. He wakes what feels like much later to Hannibal on the phone.

“Yes, Michael,” he says, trying to stay quiet, “We’ll be home in the morning. Yes. Yes, we will stop along the way. Goodnight.”

“Is something wrong?”

Hannibal shakes his head. “Your father called to tell us the children have grown, and are on their way to eating solids soon.”

Will sits up. “WHAT?”

He sits on the bed. “Will, I was kidding,” he says, pulling him in close, “They have grown, but they’re still taking the bottles just fine.”

“Don’t DO that!” Will mumbles, “I was about to run outta here naked.”

“I apologize.”

“You should.”

Will doesn’t say anything, but doesn’t push him away either, and Hannibal kisses his forehead.

“We can go home now, Will, if you feel the need.”

He looks up at him. “I feel the need,” he whispers, “I…I need to see them. Is that ok? Are you…”

Hannibal kisses him softly. “I miss them as well, Mielasis. I’ll get your clothes ready for you to change into, and pack the bags.”

Will feels their bond as Hannibal gets up, taking out clothes, and knows that Hannibal isn’t upset. He can feel nothing but calm from him.

And love.

He blinks back tears, and Hannibal turns to frown at him. “Will?”

“I love you,” Will says, “I love you so, so much.”

Hannibal smiles. “I love you too.”

“I just…no one knows me like you do, and…”

Hannibal comes up to the bed, and reaches out to touch his cheek. “That is because we’re meant for one another, Will. That’s why it feels so natural, like…”

“Breathing,” Will whispers, “It…it feels like breathing.”

He kisses his forehead. “Yes.”

Will wraps his arms around him. “I’m sorry we can’t have our sex-a-thon,” he sighs, “I just miss my kids, and I feel weird when they’re not close.”

“I know, Will.”

“But thank you,” he says, looking up, “For taking me here again and…making new memories.”

Hannibal smiles. “You’re welcome. Now, I will get your clothes so you can change.”

“Ok.”

He grabs Will’s clothes, a plain t-shirt and shorts, and Will changes as Hannibal packs what little they took out. He makes the bed, though he knows he doesn’t need to, and sits down while he watches Hannibal finish up.

“Ready to go?”

Will nods.

They go downstairs, and outside where Hannibal helps Will into the car before grabbing his hand. “I’m going to go check us out.”

“Ok.”

He closes the door, leaving the car on, and Will sighs staring out the window.

Will is about to close his eyes when he sees something out of the corner of his eye.

It’s a dog.

He blinks, fear suddenly filling him, and the dog just wanders past the hotel down into the bushes. Will covers his eyes, shaking, and takes several deep breaths just as Hannibal comes into the car.

"Will? Will I could feel something is wrong. What's happened?"

Will falls into him, shaking, and Hannibal holds him tight as he tries to calm down.

"Tell me what's wrong, WIll. Please."

He takes several breaths, tears filling his eyes, and wraps his arms around Hannibal.

"I…I saw…a dog. It was just there and it went into the bushes but…"

Hannibal kisses his head. "It triggered unhappy memories."

"Y…yeah."

"I apologize for leaving you alone, Will."

"You didn't know some random dog would wander in the parking lot."

"I know, but…"

Will looks up, shaking his head. "I'm fine, Hannibal. Just spooked."

He touches Will's cheek. "It pains me that he's taken something you once loved and turned it into a fear."

Will sighs, trying not to cry again. "Me too."

They sit there for a moment, as Will settles, and he sits up with a groan.

"Ok, let's go."

"You're certain?"

"Yeah," he says, taking Hannibal's hand, "I'm ok."

They pull out of the parking lot with ease, it's almost nine now and there's no one coming in it seems. He leans against him again, feeling sleepy, and tries to stay awake but falls asleep again so fast he can't even dwell on what just happened.

Hannibal wakes him periodically, telling him how close they are, and Will just cuddles closer after. He wakes him one more time before they get to the house.

"Will?"

He blinks his eyes open. "What's wrong?"

"I told Michael I'd stop for swimming diapers and I thought I would ask if you wanted anything specific to eat."

Will looks and sees they're at the grocery store.

“I…I guess frozen pizza, and maybe some fish?”

He smiles. “Alright. Would you like to come with me or stay here?”

“Will you be gone a long time?”

“No.”

“I’ll stay.”

Hannibal kisses him again, locking the door, and Will is smart enough not to look outside. He pulls out his phone and sees several texts from Bev.

Chiyoh is so good with your kids. I think she’s born to be an aunt.

Your dad is freaking out every time they start crawling away and looking for toys. He went out and got them little fishes to play with it’s so cute.

I hope you’re smart enough to at least get a bigger house if you’re about to have more tadpoles cuz this place is way too small for what you already have.

Hannibal says you’re sleeping every time he calls here. ARE YOU PREGNANT ALREADY?

ANSWER ME GRAHAM!

I’ll talk to you when we get there.

!!!!!!!!

He sets his phone down, smiles, and waits for Hannibal to return. Hannibal gets back in about fifteen minutes, which by then Will's already streaming something on his phone he barely notices the car door open behind him.

"Oh!"

"I apologize, I thought you heard me."

"Sorry, I was just watching something."

"I see."

"Did you get everything?"

"Oh yes."

He watches Hannibal fill the car with what seems to be way more than he said he was going to get, and closes the door to join him again.

"Did you buy the whole store?"

Hannibal smiles. "I want you to have what you need, Will."

"How many pizzas did you get?"

"You'll see."

Will smiles as he lays against him the rest of the way, and when they pull up to the house Bev runs out immediately. Will steps outside before she can yell at him.

“I thought you weren’t coming till tomorrow! You’d better…”

Will puts up his hand. “Grab some bags, and I will…tell everyone inside.”

Between the three of them they empty the car, and Will instantly feels a pull when he sees the kids almost jumping into the water fully clothed.

“Will?”

“I…I need to…”

“Can someone get Will his robe, please?”

“I will,” Chiyoh says, “Where is it?”

“I just washed it,” Michael mumbles, “It’s on the bed.”

She rushes down the hall, and Will’s already taking off this shirt sitting on the couch while Bev brings him the babies. They latch on fast, and he sighs feeling comfortable again.

“You’re glowing,” she says, smiling, “Are you?”

Will looks at the three of them.

“Yeah, we’re having more babies.”

His Dad's face lights up and he kneels down by Will's side. "More? Oh boy you're gonna have a damn football team!"

Will smiles. "That's what I said."

"I'm happy for you," Chiyoh says, "Your children are very well behaved, so I can assume the next will be too."

"Thanks."

Bev hugs him, trying not to smush Dylan and Baby Bev on his sides.

"So many babies."

He laughs.

"We'll need some help."

"And a bigger house."

"We're working on that."

Bev smiles.

"Good."

Will feeds the kids fast, and they all take turns burping them before they get settled for the night. He keeps on his robe, sitting up, and they all sit on the floor.

“Is it ok if we stick around?” Bev asks.

“Sure. Breakfast tomorrow?”

“Just like old times,” Bev laughs, “Though loads happier.”

He smiles.

“Way, way happier.”

They say goodnight, Bev making sure to pat Will’s belly though it’s barely different, and before long they’re alone again. Hannibal settles in behind him.

“The cribs will be here tomorrow,” he sighs, “And the house is moving along.”

Will sighs.

“As much as I loved our time away, it’s good to be home.”

“Yes, it most certainly is.”

Will falls asleep with Hannibal holding him and hand on his belly.

It really is good to be home.

Chapter 94

Breakfast is just like old times the next morning, though at least this time Will knows why he's suddenly so hungry and tired. Hannibal makes way too much food: pancakes, sausage, and just for good measure handmade syrups of many types, and when they finally stop he can see everyone's a little too full.

"Ugh," Bev groans, "Your husband is a menace. I don't think I'll move for a week."

Chiyoh pulls her in close, and Will feels his chest ache seeing them together looking so happy.

"I'll take care of you, Bebe," Chiyoh whispers, making Will smile.

Bev blushes, but doesn't pull away. "I'll be fine, I just…"

"It's ok, Bebe," he teases, "Let her take care of you, at least as far as your parents will allow."

She picks up a sausage and throws it at him, but he bats it away.

"Shut up, don't act like you two aren't worse."

Will picks the sausage up and pops it into his mouth, still smiling, "Oh we are, but that's not gonna stop me."

Hannibal puts his hand over Will's on the table, and Michael sighs.

“Sorry, Dad,” Will says, frowning but not pulling his hand away, “It’s kinda hard to…not.”

He shakes his head and smiles. “It’s fine, Kid,” he sighs, “I just…it just makes me a little jealous to be the only one at the table not paired up.”

Chiyoh looks at him. “You’re a very nice person, Mister Graham,” she says, “And while I don’t find you very attractive I’m sure someone else will soon.”

“Chiyoh,” Bev says, “That’s not really helping.”

She frowns. “I was trying to be supportive.”

Will’s Dad sighs. “Thanks anyway.”

The babies take that time to start fussing out of their morning nap, and Will leaves the table to go tend to them. Bev comes too, and Hannibal stays to clean up while they all move the babies to feed.

“I don’t know how you’re gonna do this,” Bev says, “I mean…how are you gonna feed them all?”

Will holds them to him, frowning, and blinks. “I…I don’t know. I guess bottles and…I…I didn’t really think about that part.”

Bev scoffs, covering him up a little. “Well, I’ll be on baby duty for a while and Chiyoh is getting the hang of the bottles and they liked to swim with her.”

Will smiles. “You swam with them?”

“They’re very good swimmers,” Chiyoh says, “Very intuitive under water, really, for their age. I suspect they’ll have another growth soon.”

Will frowns. They already got bigger overnight, however slight that might be, and he realizes he really doesn’t know how fast they’ll age. “I didn’t grow this fast, I don’t think.”

“You were half human, they’re only a quarter. And you seem rather fertile for just being of age, so perhaps…they’ll be even stronger than you ever were.”

He runs his hands over Dylan’s head, and feels him latch on harder.

“I didn’t realize the baby stage would be so…”

“Will?”

Will looks up and sees Hannibal frowning. “I’m fine.”

“You don’t feel fine.”

Bev and Chiyoh both stand, and Bev pulls her in close. “I think that’s our cue,” she says, smiling, “Thanks for breakfast Sugar Monster, and Will…it’s gonna be ok, yeah?”

“Yeah,” he says, “Thanks for…having baby duty.”

“It was a blast, wasn’t it, Chi?”

Chiyoh smiles and takes her hand. “Yes, we had a very good time.”

“See you soon.”

The two of them leave together, still holding hands, and Will blinks back tears as the door closes.

“I ruined that I guess.”

Hannibal kneels down. “Will, you ruined nothing.”

“I was getting all weepy, I just…are they really gonna grow up that soon? Will they not be babies for very long?”

He runs his hands over the top of the babies’ heads one by one. “They’re growing rapidly, yes, but they will not be needing solids for another month at the most. I suspect at the rate they’re developing they will be one human year in three months time.”

Will blinks. “That fast?”

“That’s just an estimate, I cannot be sure.”

He moves Dylan up from his chest, and Hannibal takes him into his arms to burp him.

“Wow.”

“My sister aged much more rapidly,” Hannibal says, “I remember…Mischa was walking after a month.”

He feels tears fall down his cheeks. “I don’t want it to go that fast.”

Hannibal leans in and kisses him softly. “There’s more to come, Mielasis, I assure you.”

Will sighs, smiling. “I guess I better get used to this.”

“You’ve been thrust into everything very quickly, Will, I understand if you’re overwhelmed.”

“That’s an understatement,” Will laughs, “But…it feels more right with them here than without them.”

Hannibal stands with Dylan, and rocks him back and forth while Will feeds Emma close to his other side. “I know the pain we’ve both gone through has been much, but…there’s nothing but happiness ahead of us I assure you.”

“Isn’t that jinxing it?”

“No, because it’s the truth.”

Will smiles, wiping his eyes. “I hope so.”

He finishes feeding the others, taking turns back and forth between them until the babies are in the pool. Hannibal comes to sit with him after, holding him close as he leans in wearing his robe.

“How are you feeling now?”

“Tired,” Will sighs, “But it’s a good tired. They take a lot of me anyway but now…”

“You have more of them doing the same.”

“Yeah.”

“Will…”

“Hmm?”

“The house will not be finished for some time, and with the babies coming not long from now…we’ll need to figure out something to do.”

“I know.”

“And there’s the matter of appearances.”

“You mean what *they* will think of our football team?”

“Yes, that and the paperwork.”

“I don’t….”

Hannibal lifts up his chin with two fingers. “There’s your schooling to think of, and the matter of how many of them there will be. I don’t want this to be hard on you.”

“I’m happy, Hannibal. I promise.”

“I know, but—”

Will puts his fingers over Hannibal's lips and sits up, climbing into his lap. He lays his head on Hannibal's shoulder, taking his hand, and squeezes. "I never knew what I wanted out of my life, you know? And now…now this feels like…it feels right. I still…there's an ache where they were and the pain is still there but it's healing."

Hannibal kisses his hand. "Will…"

"And it'll keep on healing," he whispers, "Everyday, every second, for the rest of our lives."

He kisses Will's forehead and keeps hold of his hand. "Yes, we will."

Will nuzzles his neck.

"If I fall asleep wake me up in an hour, ok? Or at least when the cribs come?"

"I will, I promise."

His eyes grow heavy as he watches the babies play, crawling and swimming to each other.

"I think," Will says, "I want to take them in the lake soon."

He feels Hannibal tense up. "You're certain?"

"Yeah," Will says, "Yeah, I am."

"Will…."

He closes his eyes. “It feels like it’s time.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek and he feels tears fill his eyes. “There’s no rush.”

“I know, but…if I wait any longer they’ll run out there themselves.”

Hannibal smiles. “I’ll hold them back.”

Will sniffles. “I don’t want you to.”

He pulls Will in closer, and Will hums. “You sing our song so beautifully.”

Will opens his eyes a little, kissing his cheek as Hannibal hums along.

“So do you.”

“Sleep well, Mielasis.”

He falls asleep fast, unable to stop himself, and when he wakes it’s to Hannibal and his Dad arguing in whispers.

“I said to Will that we would wait for him! It’s not a surprise if the person doesn’t want you to do the surprising!”

“He’s tired! He’ll be happy that he…”

He sits up, yawning. “He’s awake now,” Will sighs, groaning, “What time is it?”

“Lunchtime,” Hannibal says, coming over to help him up, “I apologize, but your father was being unreasonable.”

“Me? I was being…”

Will sees the babies are all smushed into their bassinets. “You’re gonna wake them up, just stop. Ok? I’m up now so I can supervise, but I’m starving.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “I will start the frozen pizzas.”

Will smiles as he pulls away. “I love you so so much.”

Hannibal blows a kiss at him as he disappears into the kitchen and Will sits down again with a groan.

“Son…”

“Don’t. Just…be nice, ok? Hannibal is trying his best.”

His father frowns. “I was just trying to help.”

“I know, Dad.”

“It’s a lot of work and…”

“Hannibal’s a doctor,” Will says, smiling, “I think he’s ok with a little work with screwdrivers.”

“I know that but I just…”

Will’s smile widens. “You wanted to be Super Grandpa.”

Michael blushes. “No, I didn’t. That’s stupid.”

Will laughs. “It’s ok, Dad. I know it’s rough and it’s…a lot. You’re doing better than I thought you would be considering.”

His Dad sits down beside him and sighs. “You like this, and you’re happy. I’d be an asshole if I was upset again. This is…it’s your life and I’m just hoping to be along for the ride.”

Will hugs him in close. “You always will be, Super Grandpa.”

Michael laughs. “Yeah?”

“Always. How else will Hannibal and I get any alone time?”

His father groans.

“Will…”

He giggles, kissing his Dad’s cheek. “I’m sorry it was too easy.”

“I only got a little angry this time so I guess it’s not the worst thing to hear anymore.”

“See? You’re learning already.”

The babies move a little, rocking their bassinets, and his father sighs.

“They’re getting big,” he says, “Bigger than you were this fast.”

“It’s cuz I wasn’t as much sea monster as they are,” Will says, “At least that’s our guess.”

“They’ll be off your…you know…soon.”

“Probably, yeah.”

“What do seababies eat?”

Will thinks for a minute. “Tuna?”

His father laughs. “Kid…”

“Hey, I love fish! If they’re even half as into it as I am…”

He falls into Will, laughing loudly, and that’s when Hannibal comes into the room again.

“Did I miss something?”

Will grins.

“What do sea toddlers eat?”

Hannibal thinks. “I would assume what most babies do, though we do enjoy meat more than most and fish. Why?”

Will starts laughing, almost too loudly, and the babies start to fuss.

“Sorry, sorry, I just…”

Hannibal walks over, picking up Beverly. “I’m certain I just had to be there.”

Will smiles as his Dad raises his head. “Yeah, you did. It’s…a Graham thing.”

Hannibal sighs. “Am I not an honorary Graham yet?”

His father shakes his head. “I draw the line at that one, nope. No way.”

Hannibal smiles. “Then I suppose when we can…Will would have to change his name to Lecter on our wedding day.”

Michael pauses.

“Hyphenated,” he says, “Final offer.”

Hannibal grins. “Deal.”

Will leans back as they get into it about the wedding that isn't happening anytime soon, and feels a burst of happiness come unbidden.

This is his life now.

And he wouldn't change it for the world.

Chapter 95

The cribs take longer to put together than Will expects, even with three of them, though he does mostly supervise and keep his Dad and Hannibal from fighting the entire time. They get all six cribs together and plant them in every corner of the living room for space. Will and Hannibal move the sleeping babies to each crib successfully and take the bassinets into the next room leaving more space.

Though the kids wake up not long after, screaming like they're terrified, and Will runs to pick up the closest while his Dad and Hannibal pick up the rest.

He frowns.

"Um…."

Hannibal is holding Beverly and Emma, while his father has Ethan and Dylan leaving Sebastian and Liam for Will.

"They don't like their new accommodations."

"Well wouldn't you be upset to fall asleep in a regular bed and wake up in a cage?" His Dad says, making Will's heart stop.

He runs out of the room with Sebastian and Liam in tears, terrified, and slams the door closed holding them close as they cry.

"Shhh, shh," he whispers, "Shh, it's ok, I'm here. He puts them to his chest and they latch on as Will starts to whimper.

"I won't put you back in there," he whispers, "I won't, I won't…"

“Will.”

He looks up, his vision blurred. “I won’t put them back in those things,” he says, shaking his head, “I won’t. I won’t, I…”

Hannibal is carrying the other four babies and brings them over, closing the door as he comes inside.

“We’ll talk about it later.”

“I WON’T!” Will yells, as Emma starts to cry louder, “I WILL NOT PUT THEM IN CAGES! I…”

Hannibal puts the babies on his nipples, and he starts to sob as Hannibal pulls him close.

“Shh…”

Will whimpers. “I won’t,” he repeats.

“As you wish.”

The babies feed for a while, calm now, and they hold them between them after they’ve been fed until they fall asleep again.

“Dad?”

“I told him we’d speak of it later.”

Will sniffles. “I didn’t want to tell him.”

“I know.”

“I’m sorry,” he whimpers, pressing his face against Hannibal’s cheek, “I’m sorry, I’m…”

“Shhh, don’t cry Mielasis. I can’t stand it when you cry.”

Will nuzzles his cheek. “I can’t stop, I’m…”

He lifts his chin up and kisses Will softly. “We will figure out the crib situation in a way that satisfies you, I promise.”

Will sniffles. “How? We can’t put them back in the bassinets, and they can’t sleep on the floor.”

“We’ll figure it out.”

He looks down between them, where the babies are settled nicely. “They seem to like this.”

“Yes, but they can’t sleep here till they’re of age now can they?”

Will laughs. “I guess not.”

They both sigh just as a knock comes to the door. Will closes his eyes and breathes in Hannibal’s scent. “Come in, Dad.”

His father walks in frowning and shuts the door.

“Is everything ok?”

Will sits up, sniffling as he wipes his eyes. “Yeah, everything’s fine.”

Hannibal takes Will’s hand as he sits up too, and Will lays his head against Hannibal’s shoulder.

“Is it later now?”

We do not have to talk about it now.

Yeah, we do .

Will sighs. “I think you need to sit down, Dad.”

Michael glares at Hannibal. “What did he do? Huh? Is it something he did?”

Will frowns. “What? No! Why would you think that?”

“You freaked out and I have no idea why, Son. Forgive me if I blame the Old Man from the Sea here.”

Will glares at him. “Dad, that’s enough. You know his name.”

“Fine,” Michael says, sitting on the edge of the bed to touch Sebastian who is still asleep, “Forgive me if I blame *Hannibal* here. Better?”

“Much,” Hannibal says.

They both glare at each other and Will sighs. “Dad, it’s not something Hannibal did.”

“Then who? Cuz I didn’t get to kill that bitch, so if there’s someone else…”

“It’s already been taken care of,” Hannibal says, squeezing Will’s hand as Will clutches him harder, “By both of us.”

Michael blinks. “What?”

“Dad,” Will says, his eyes filling with tears as his vision goes red, “There was…there was another creature.”

“Another one? Why didn’t…”

“He took Will from me,” Hannibal growls, “And I could not find him for days, it…I could hardly function I was so terrified.”

Will nuzzles his neck. “Hannibal….”

“What happened?”

“He lured me out with a dog,” Will says, hating himself, “And I was pregnant, I was…he wanted the babies.”

“Shit, fuck, Son…”

“He was gonna keep me alive long enough that they didn’t need me and then kill me. He wanted. He…he was a monster and we killed him. Hannibal found me and we killed him.”

“Will, Son, look at me.”

Will shakes his head. “Dad, I didn’t want to ever tell you. I didn’t, I…when you said the stuff about cages it came back because he wanted to put us all in tank cages and have them live like that and I couldn’t…”

He hears his father get up and smells him at his back.

“Will, please.”

Will turns to see his father’s face covered in tears. “Dad….”

“You did good, Will. You…you protected your kids just like I protected you. I’m so damn proud of you, Son.”

Will lets go of Hannibal and hugs his father, sobbing, and hears the babies start to fuss. He turns and sees Hannibal is in tears too.

“I have them, Will, it’s alright.”

“No, I…I need to hold them.”

He moves over, taking the babies in close to him again like he did when they were still eggs. They fall back to sleep fast, clutching close, and he lays down again.

"Dad…"

Michael smiles. "They're starting to look like you more and more everyday, thank god."

Will laughs. "You're so mean."

Hannibal moves in closer to Will and kisses his cheek. "For once I will agree with your Father."

Will sniffles. "It's a miracle."

Michael wipes his cheeks. "You know, if there's any more secrets you both better fess up now cuz I'm not sure I can handle anymore."

They look at each other.

Will.

No.

"Nope," Will lies, smiling, "No more secrets."

His father lets out a long breath. "Thank fuck for that."

Hannibal squeezes his head.

You're certain?

You think I want my Dad to know I murdered someone who did nothing to me to get married?

I suppose not.

"So, if all the secrets are spilled, what do you want to do about the cribs? Want me to dismantle them or…"

"No," Hannibal says, "I have some ideas of what to do with them, but I would need your help. I'm not quite…as adept at carpentry as you are."

Michael blinks as he turns to Will. "Was that a compliment?"

Will smiles. "I think so?"

His father smiles. "Well, ain't that somethin'. Sure, I'll help. Just tell me what you want to do."

"I'll draw a picture."

"Ok, sure," Michael sighs, standing up, "I'm gonna go put away some of the mess while you all…bond in here or whatever."

"Ok, dad."

He moves to leave and stops to look at Will again.

“Son, don’t *ever* think you can’t tell me anything. Okay? I love you no matter what.”

Will smiles. “I know.”

“Good.”

The minute he leaves Hannibal pulls Will in closer, kissing his cheek. “That did not make you want to confess?”

“Nope,” he says, “And I never will.”

“You’re certain?”

“Yep.”

They lay there for a bit longer until the kids get ancy, and Will helps keep them wrangled while they crawl all over the bed. He laughs as Hannibal tries to keep Dylan from falling off the edge, and finally he stands up with Emma in his hands.

“Alright, alright!” he says, “Let’s go.”

Hannibal frowns. “Go where?”

Will takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. “I want to have a family swim.”

Hannibal blinks “Will, that does not have to happen today. Not after…”

Will picks up Ethan and Dylan. “Yeah, it kinda does. You comin’? Cuz I can have Dad bring them but I don’t think he’ll make it to the cave.”

Hannibal smiles. “Alright.”

Will puts on his robe with Hannibal’s help and they carry the babies outside together. It’s later than Will thought, the sun low in the sky, and he brings them to the boat. Hannibal follows, saying nothing, and His Father stands on the shore to watch.

“Dad,” Will says, “I’d ask you to come but…”

Michael shakes his head. “Nah,” he scoffs, “Not my thing, but maybe let me see ‘em swim a little closer to home before it gets too dark?”

Will smiles. “Ok.”

They take off in the boat, Will sitting on the edge of the boat with all the babies suddenly still on his lap. His connection to them has faded a lot more now, but he can feel them feeling the pull of the lake so close.

“It’s good, huh?” he asks, “It’s *home* .”

The boat stops just shy of the cave, and Hannibal gets in the water first while Will hands him Emma and Ethan. He watches him put them in the water both at the same time, and the way their little eyes widen makes his chest ache.

Hannibal smiles. “There’s nothing like it, is there little ones?”

The babies start to swim, staying above water, and Will hands him Dylan who does the same before all six are in the water swimming around Hannibal. Will comes in last, jumping down with a flourish and to his surprise all of the babies follow.

He smiles as he sees them under the sun barely illuminating them but he can see every part of them with his other eyes.

Ready?

They all turn to him, and he knows they can hear.

Will looks at Hannibal. *Can you catch us all?*

Hannibal smiles with his razor sharp teeth, and Will sees so much of him in the babies he doesn't seem to see at all. ***Oh yes.***

Will gathers the babies close and takes off, guiding them toward the cave. They seem to understand, following his lead, and the seven of them head inside just as Hannibal grabs Will from behind.

He laughs as they resurface, turning to kiss him, and the babies all pop up with their little red eyes.

"That doesn't count," Will teases, "We barely moved."

"I still caught you, didn't I?"

"I wasn't running!"

“Still,” he teases, “I caught you.”

Will kisses him, shifting back as he touches his scaly face. “Yeah, I guess you did.”

The sound of the babies laughing makes them both turn to see them playing in the water like they do back home. Will’s chest aches as they go under and up again, playing together, and Hannibal holds him tight.

“They’re home,” he whispers, “At last.”

Will sighs. “Yeah, they are.”

He doesn’t know how long they’re there.

Minutes?

Hours?

But they finally leave when it’s dark out, which makes him feel bad since he promised his father, but when they take the babies back into the boat they’re all so worn out he knows they wouldn’t have been able anyway.

Will sits with them on the floor of the boat as Hannibal drives, watching the house get closer, and as they pull up his father is still there.

“You wore ‘em out, huh?”

“Sorry, Dad,” he sighs, “I tried but…”

He hands Seb and Bev over to his father who smiles, shaking his head. “It was a *Graham Lecter* thing, huh? Not for the old Graham?”

“Yes, it was, but perhaps next time you can join us.”

His father blinks. “I…I’m not much of a swimmer but…I’d like that.”

“Alright then.”

Will smiles, holding Emma and Ethan, and they all head inside the house. They end up putting the babies back onto the bed together, and they huddle close like they did as eggs.

“Would ya look at that? Like p…little kittens.”

He feels his chest ache and he hugs his Dad. “Yeah, little sea kittens.”

“I will start dinner,” Hannibal says.

“I’ll help,” Dad sighs, making them both blink at him, “Hey, I can cook!”

Will smiles. “Ok, dad.”

Will climbs in closer to the babies, and to his shock they huddle close to his belly like they’re trying to bond with the new eggs. He blinks back tears.

“I love you all so much,” he whispers, “So, so much.”

He closes his eyes, overwhelmed, and soon drifts surrounded by his children.

And never more at peace in his entire life.

Chapter 96

The call comes out of nowhere a week later, and Will doesn't expect the outcome.

Bev and Chiyoh have been MIA since their babysitting time, which he realizes later he should've expected. They were growing closer, that much was obvious, and yet when Bev's call comes he doesn't realize the weight of it.

"Good morning, Aunty Bev," he teases, trying to feed two babies in the new highchairs Hannibal brought home.

"Will," Bev says, her voice thick, "I'm outside."

Will blinks. "What?"

"I'm outside," she repeats, "I need to talk to you."

"Why don't you just come in?" he laughs, "I'm trying to feed the babies mushed up peas, which is *not* going well like it did with their brothers and their Daddy. Is it, sweetheart? Huh? Is it?"

Seb and Dylan whine, their mouths open as if they're waiting for a bottle or Will's breast.

"Will," she repeats, "I need…please."

He pauses. "Bev, what's wrong?"

"Just come outside," she says, ending the call.

Will stares at his cell phone screen, confused, and is about to call out for someone to take over when both potential feeders come down the hall. His Dad and Hannibal have been trying to remodel the cribs the last few days and it seems to be bringing them closer, much to Will's surprise.

"...and I told you…"

"Can one of you take over?" Will asks, making them both pause.

Hannibal frowns. "Is something wrong?"

"No, it…I don't know. Bev is here and she won't come in. She sounds upset."

Hannibal touches Will's hand on the table.

Perhaps Chiyoh has explained the mating ritual?

Will blinks.

"Shit."

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "Go. They'll be fine."

Will gets up, heart beating wildly in his chest, and nods rushing all the way outside. Bev's car is there, running, and he gets inside saying nothing. She's staring straight ahead, tears in her eyes, and he knows what she's going to say before she even says it.

"Molly?"

He looks away. “I don’t regret it.”

“She didn’t do *anything* to you,” she hisses, “Will, she was a bitch, I get that, but she…”

Will looks at her. “Without Molly I wouldn’t be bonded to my husband right now, so forgive me if I don’t regret that. She was a bitch who wasn’t going to contribute anything other than using her friends and spending her parents’ money. The world is better for her being gone.”

Bev shakes her head. “I can’t…I can’t even think about you killing someone and then you… why did you have to ask Chiyoh to help?”

“We needed her.”

“You…”

He grabs her arm. “Bev, do you love Chiyoh?”

“Y…yes but—”

“You pushed her away when you found out what she was, but you realized the feelings you have were worth the strangeness of all of this. I know you did, I know…I know it seems like something you could *never* do…but I don’t regret killing Molly and I don’t regret killing Leanne. My family is what’s important to me.”

Bev puts her hand over his. “I can’t kill someone, I just can’t.”

“Bev, when…when we were with Abigail and her Dad…would you have killed her to save me?”

She stares at him with wide eyes. “Will, I…”

“Would you have?”

Bev nods, squeezing his hand. “I…yes.”

“You love her, and you…it’s different now. You’re human, yeah, but you…you’re a part of something wonderful.”

“But I…”

“Would you kill to protect her? Save her?”

“Y…yes.”

“What makes this any different?”

She let out a laugh, shaking her head. “It’s murder to get married, Will, it’s a little…”

“One person,” Will says, “It’s…I know it seems like you could never but…trust me…the bond is everything. It’s…it’s everything. You don’t have to make this choice now, right? I mean, you have a lifetime to think of it.”

She sniffles, and wipes the sudden tears on her cheeks. “She’s gonna get older than me, and she…”

“You have time,” Will repeats, “You don’t have to think about forever now. You’re not like us, ok? You…you’re not like us.”

Bev rushes forward and hugs him, sniffling as he feels tears on his neck.

“I feel it,” she whispers, “I feel so much with her, and I don’t want to lose her.”

“I know.”

“My parents love her,” Bev continues, “She…she’s it, Will. I know she’s it.”

Will hugs her tightly.

“You’re sixteen,” he says, “You have time. A couple of years won’t change much.”

She lifts her head up.

“No, it won’t.”

Will wipes the tears from her cheeks. “About Molly…”

Bev hugs him again and sighs.

“You’re my best friend,” she whispers, “That’s all I know.”

He sighs, tears filling his eyes. “Bev…”

“And I want to be the cool aunt to your kids and you can be the cool uncle monster to mine.”

Will laughs. “It’s a deal.”

They sit there in silence, the worry slowly fading, and Bev’s cell phone rings. She takes it out and he sees Chiyoh’s name splash across the screen.

“Bev…”

She answers and puts it on speakerphone.

“Beverly.”

“I’m with Will,” she says, her voice shaking.

“I suspected as much. Hello, Will.”

“Hey,” he says awkwardly, “I..um…”

“Thank you for being there for her.”

“It’s nothing.”

“No, it’s…it means a lot to me.”

Will hugs Bev with his arm on her side. “You’re welcome.”

Bev sniffles, and he feels her getting upset again but stays quiet.

“Chi?”

“Yes?”

“I don’t…I’m…I love you,” she whispers, “That’s all I know right now.”

Will hears Chiyoh’s voice shaking as she replies. “That is a lot.”

“Is it?”

“Yes, My Perfect, it is.”

Bev lets out a sob. “I’ll be home soon, if you…want to come back.”

“I never left,” she says, “I’m in the water outside your home.”

Will smiles. “I’m sure Bev would love to go on a swim.”

Bev laughs. “Shut up, Will. Chi, how are you on the phone?”

“I put my phone on the shore, and waited under the dock. Beverly…”

“I’m coming home,” she says, “For that swim.”

“I will be here.”

“I love you.”

“I love you.”

The call ends and Bev hugs Will again.

“Bev…”

“No more secrets, you said,” she whispers, “Is this the last?”

Will sighs. “Yeah it is.”

Bev lifts her head. “Promise?”

He nods.

Bev sighs. “Ok, I…I gotta go but…I’ll come over tomorrow. Okay? Maybe with Chiyoh so you and your monster can have some fun time.”

Will laughs. “Ok.”

She looks at him and smiles, her face still wet with tears. “What a summer this has been, huh?”

Will nods. “Yeah.”

“I love you.”

“I love you.”

They hug one more time before Will leaves, relieved that it went that well, and walks toward the door for it to open before he even gets there. Hannibal is holding Dylan, who is sucking away at a bottle.

“I felt your relief.”

Will wipes his cheeks. “Yeah.”

“She and Chiyoh?”

“Good for now,” he says, “I don’t know what’s gonna happen but something I said helped I guess.”

“I see.”

Will takes Dylan, and they walk inside where his Dad has the rest of the babies curled up over him.

“Is everything ok?”

“Yeah, it’s ok. Bev was having girlfriend problems.”

“Ah.”

Will feeds Dylan some more, and burps him before letting him swim around. The sight of his son swimming calms down the worry he’d felt just moments before, and he sighs as Hannibal sits on the floor behind him.

She knows then?

Yeah.

And?

She took it better than I thought.

Good.

They watch Dylan for what feels like forever until they both get in with their son. The water gives the calmest effect of all, and soon Will is following Dylan underwater while Hannibal watches from the sidelines. He catches the baby, much bigger now, and makes him laugh, tickling before they go under again.

He loses track of how long they swim, but soon Dylan is too tired and he brings him over to sit with his siblings.

Will rubs his back as he falls asleep, tears in his eyes, and looks up to see his father asleep as well.

“Is it safe to leave them all on him like this?”

“They’ve done the same with you.”

“Yeah but…”

Hannibal hugs him from behind, kissing his cheek. “They’ll be fine.”

He sighs.

“I…I want to…you…I’ve never been where you buried them.”

Hannibal is quiet.

“I know you think I’m not ready, but…I’ve never been, and I just…”

He turns Will around, tears in his eyes. “Will, perhaps…”

Will shakes his head. “I want to see it.”

Hannibal sighs. “As you wish. I think perhaps we should move the children on the larger bed for now. I don’t know how you’ll be after, and I know you don’t want them to see you that way.”

Will sniffles. “Okay.”

They wake his father, who is still too tired to do more than follow them to the bedroom, falling down onto the bed with the babies as he did on the couch. Will watches them latch onto his sides, so comfortable now, and it makes him smile.

“Remember when they wouldn’t let him touch them as eggs?”

“I remember.”

“How time flies.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek and takes Will’s hand. “Yes.”

Will sighs and turns to him. “Now?”

“Yes.”

They walk out of the bedroom, closing the door, and through the hallway that Will has been down so many times in the past few months it feels like muscle memory. Hannibal takes him into the dining room, and out toward the laundry area where the door they never use seems to be waiting.

Will takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. His whole body tells him he’s not ready, but he ignores it. “Ok.”

The two of them walk together through the door and outside where the back of the house he never has been in seems to quiet. He lets Hannibal take him just toward the trees and they stop at a stone surrounded by flowers.

The stone just says one word.

OURS

It’s obviously been handmade, and he knows Hannibal did it himself.

Will's vision blurs, as he kneels down to touch.

"I feel terrible for never coming, it's…it's beautiful."

Hannibal kneels down beside him. "Do not feel that way, Mielasis. You needed time, and they would be here waiting."

He nods as he runs his fingers over the letters while touching his belly.

"Hello," he whispers, "I'm sorry I'm late. I just…I wasn't ready."

Hannibal puts his hand over Will's in the grass and entwines their fingers.

"I'm sorry I didn't…I couldn't…"

"Will, you did *everything* . I promise you, you did *everything* ."

He leans into Hannibal, sobbing, and Hannibal hugs him tight with only one arm.

"Hello little ones," Hannibal whispers, "We miss you everyday and so do your siblings. Our family thrives, but…we remember you even if we never go to meet. We know you will be waiting on the other side. Always."

Will falls into his chest as Hannibal holds him, hand still on the stone, and breaks. He should have come sooner, done this better, but he's here now.

That's all that matters.

They sit there for what feels like forever after he's exhausted his tears, and Hannibal holds him in his lap. The two of them hum, the sound as beautiful as it was the day Will first heard it, and Will feels the love through their bond.

This isn't a goodbye, not at all, it's a reminder of what they lost.

And what they've gained.

He picks some flowers and puts them on the stone, running his hand over the letters one more time before they go.

"We love you," he repeats, "And we'll never stop."

Hannibal kisses Will's cheek when they stand, hugging him once more.

"Not ever."

The two of them head around the house then, not going inside, and take off their clothes when they get to the lake's edge. They jump into the water and start to swim, the feel of the water making everything better, and just swim.

They just swim.

Chapter 97

The cribs are - in one word - perfect.

They're entirely open on the edge, almost like a toddler bed, and still have the spindles on the back but when he first sees them it brings tears to his eyes.

"I love it."

His father and Hannibal are both standing together in the living room, having worked on them for over a week now he was glad to see they were getting along. His dad patted Hannibal's arm, smiling, and Hannibal's relief was immediate.

"You're certain?"

Will nods, running up to kiss him, and Hannibal touches his cheek. "We'll bring in the others, though with how easily they can get out I'm sure there will be much bed sharing."

Will laughs, patting his belly. "Oh, I'm sure. But…I mean…they would've done it anyway, right?"

"Absolutely," his Dad says, laughing, "I'll meet you in there Han."

He smiles as his father leaves, wrapping his arms around Hannibal. "Han?"

Hannibal smiles. "It's…a…moniker…your father has bestowed upon me since we began our work."

"And you're okay with this?"

“I don’t mind it.”

Will kisses him again. “I’m so happy you’re getting along.”

“As am I,” Hannibal whispers, putting both hands on his face, “I will return, Mielasis. Perhaps you can prepare the children for their nap?”

He laughs, stepping back. “I’ll try, but no promises.”

The babies, already fast swimmers, are even faster crawlers when they want to be. Will heads for the pool, and it’s like they know. Dylan climbs out first and dashes off so quick Will can hardly catch up but it lets the others get free in return. He has Dylan, Emma, and Ethan in his arms but the others are still loose when Hannibal and Michael return both with a different crib in their arms.

“Will?”

“I tried,” he says, falling onto the couch with a sigh, “They’re wearing me out.”

Michael laughs, setting his down. “I got one, you get the other two Han.”

“I’ll try.”

Will lays down, letting the others suckle, though they’re a little rough now with teeth he’s milking as much time as he can out of nursing. Hannibal returns with Sebastian and Liam, frowning as he watches Will.

“Will…”

“Just…it’s not that bad,” he says, “I can handle it.”

He sighs. “As you wish, but I am getting some bottles for the rest.”

“Fine.”

Will runs fingers through his babies’ hair, smiling as they clutch to him, and he knows this might be the last time he gets to do this.

Dylan is almost a month old, and he looks nearly four. The others are not far behind.

He winces as Dylan bites. “No, no, sweetie. Don’t…don’t hurt Daddy. Okay?”

Will knows that anything he says means little, but it’s worth a shot.

Hannibal returns along with his father and both sit in chairs giving bottles to the others.

“I think,” Michael says, as Beverly sucks down hard, “You should start trying some food, like non milk food.”

Will looks away. “They’re not even a month yet, Dad.”

“I know, Son, but…they look older and you know it.”

“Michael, I think Will…”

“Will is right here,” Will mumbles, “And he can hear you.”

“Son…”

He moves the babies to the other side, and sighs. “I just…just let me have this, ok? Just a little longer.”

Neither of them says anything and Will is so distracted he can hardly enjoy the time with his babies helping them burp before beginning to rock Dylan. He presses his forehead to Dylan’s, who shifts reaching out to touch his face.

“Da.”

Will blinks.

“Oh my god.”

He can feel Hannibal’s shock, and Hannibal rushes over with the other babies kneeling at Will’s side.

Dylan smiles. “Da!”

Hannibal laughs, and Will bursts into tears.

“Will…”

“He, he…he…”

Hannibal nuzzles Will’s cheek. “He knows his Daddy.”

Will holds Dylan tighter, the tears coming so fast he can hardly see, and when Dylan yells again he's not the only one.

"Da!" he says, and Will touches his cheeks laughing.

"Yeah, I'm your Da. I…"

"Da! Da! Da!"

The echo is unmistakable, and Will looks down to see Emma and Ethan are off his nipples staring at him while Sebastian and Liam are doing the same.

"Well, I'll be."

Will turns to see Beverly reaching out, laughing, and he's so overwhelmed he can hardly breathe.

"Will…"

"I…I…"

His father brings Beverly over, and Hannibal lets the other two crawl onto Will. He pulls them all to him, sobbing, and they excitedly come closer.

"Da!"

"I…I cannot…this is remarkable."

The babies all turn to look at Hannibal. “Da da?”

Will bursts out laughing. “Oh my god, Hannibal…”

Hannibal reaches out and they stay laying on Will looking at him. “Da da! Da da! Da da!”

Michael’s voice is shaking when he laughs.

“Now I feel left out!”

Will hugs his babies, and Hannibal moves in closer with tears streaming down his cheeks. He kisses Will, who just cries.

His babies are growing up so fast, and he’s both so happy and so sad. “Da? Da? Da?”

Will looks, wiping his cheeks, and touches every one of their heads. “I’m ok, babies, I…I’m ok.”

They shift back again, seeming to settle, and before Will can do much at all they’re curling up against him to sleep.

“I guess we didn’t have to do much to help?”

He smiles, running his hand over their heads again. “I guess not,” he whispers, “I…” he looks up at his father, “I’ll think about the food thing.”

Michael smiles. “Even if it’s just somethin’ fishy like tuna or…”

“I will *not* be feeding my children canned tuna,” Hannibal growls, not moving, “I will catch and kill the fish myself and we will cook it then.”

“Hannibal….”

He looks at Will with red eyes, frowning. “Do you doubt my skill?”

“No, no,” Will says, reaching for him, “No, not at all.”

“Then it’s settled.”

They sit there, basking in the after effects of such a huge event, and soon Hannibal takes each baby from him. Will wants to fight it, but just watches, and when he returns pulls Hannibal almost on top of him.

“Will.”

“I’m sorry,” he says, nuzzling, “I just…it’s hard.”

“I know, Mielasis. I know.”

“But I’m happy,” he says, “Especially after that. I…I didn’t expect it.”

“Neither did I.”

“They feel me,” Will whispers, “You said they feel the two of us.”

“Yes, for now.”

“So they knew what I needed?”

“No, I…I believe they knew that it was time to tell you they loved you.”

Will feels tears in his eyes again. “And you.”

“And me, yes, but especially you. You did so much for them, Will, and they…they *know* .”

He hugs Hannibal tight, pressing his face into Hannibal’s neck. His stomach growls and he sighs, sniffling. “Ignore that.”

Hannibal reaches out to touch his bare belly, rubbing. “I will not, not when you are in need. What can I bring for you?”

“I’m fine, I just…”

“Will.”

Will sighs. “I don’t know, I…maybe surprise me? I don’t need pizza or anything heavy just… something.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek and gets up. “I will return.”

He looks behind him and sees his Dad is gone, probably not wanting to intrude on his and Hannibal’s time together. Will sighs, looking around at the cribs against the walls, and resists the urge to walk over to touch the babies again.

Will rubs his belly, and the flutter he gets in response makes him smile. “You know, I’m gonna have no room for any more cribs so you’ll have to share. Don’t be stingy, your older brothers and sisters are good sharers.”

Another flutter, and he feels a tear fall down his cheek.

“I love you too,” he says, “I…I love you so much.”

He puts both hands on his belly as another flutter follows, and closes his eyes waiting for Hannibal. Will’s suddenly so tired but his stomach is more insistent so he struggles to stay awake just as Hannibal returns with a plate.

And something that smells like peanut butter.

Will turns, and laughs as Hannibal holds out his meal.

“Peanut butter and…”

“Strawberry,” Hannibal says, kissing his cheek, “Your favorite.”

Will’s lip quivers as Hannibal kisses his cheek, and holds out the sandwich for him to take a bite. He moans, licking Haninbal’s fingers, and lets his mate feed him by hand one bite at a time. It shouldn’t be sexy, not at all, but it so is. Will is dripping by the time he’s done, and Hannibal hastily undoes his pants exposing his cock.

“Will.”

“Shh,” he whispers, “Dad might hear.”

“We…we should go to the bedroom.”

He shakes his head. “I can be quiet, Hannibal, can you?”

Hannibal’s eyes redden, and Will’s vision is the same. “You undo me.”

He smiles. “I know.”

Will sinks down on his cock, smashing their mouths together to muffle his moan, and begins to move. Hannibal takes hold of his hips, moving him fast, and every thrust up hits perfectly just where he needs.

Hannibal always knows what he needs.

He bites his tongue, shifting, and Hannibal turns them, putting Will’s scaled legs up on his shoulders. Will covers his mouth when Hannibal pulls back, biting his neck, and when he comes it's with a muffled purr. Hannibal grunts, growling as he continues, and Will can’t help himself when he springs forward to bite his neck. Hannibal comes inside him, his warmth just what Will needs, and when they sigh falling together in a tangled mess, it’s everything.

“Mmm,” Will pursed, licking his wound, “That was…”

“Amazing,” Hannibal whispers, “As it always is.”

“Yeah,” he laughs, cuddling him, “Though I think…I’m getting too big for shoulders.”

“Never,” Hannibal whispers, kissing his neck then looks up frowning, “Did I hurt you?”

“I’m a little sore but…a good sore.”

He frowns. “I’m sorry, I did not…”

“No, no,” Will says, wrapping arms around him, “Don’t do that, don’t.”

“Will, I didn’t mean to hurt you. I would *never* …”

Will kisses his neck, nuzzling against him. “I know, mate, I know. It’s just pregnancy joints and muscles, that’s all.”

“If you’re certain.”

“Very.”

Hannibal sighs. “I will strive to be more careful in the future.”

“I should’ve said something, it’s not just you here.”

He lifts his head, and smiles at Will. “No, it isn’t.”

Will smiles. “I love you.”

“And I love you.”

Will purrs happily, pressing his belly to Hannibal and taking his hand to put it on top, “And so do they.”

Hannibal growls, a low happy sound that makes Will’s smile widen. “There are…many.”

“Yeah I know,” Will whispers, “I…this time because I know it’s…it’s a lot more…obvious just how many.”

He runs his thumb over Will’s belly. “Do you know how many?”

“No, but…does it matter?”

Hannibal smiles and kisses him softly as he shakes his head. “All that matters is that they’re coming,” he whispers, “And soon.”

Will puts his hand over Hannibal’s. “I can hardly wait.”

Chapter 98

The high chairs come only a few days after their first words, a surprise from Hannibal though Will is still less than enthusiastic.

“I can feed them on my lap.”

“Will…”

He sighs. “Fine.”

It’s inevitable, he knows, for them to grow older.

That doesn’t mean he has to be super happy about it.

Emma and Ethan take to their first food well, better than he expects, and soon Will is laughing along with Hannibal who’s struggling to keep up with their appetites.

“You started this,” he laughs, “You better have enough.”

He frowns. “I’m sure I do.”

“We’ll see.”

They’re both so involved in feeding the babies that they hardly notice Will’s father till he’s almost out the door but Will looks up in time to see him.

He blinks.

“Dad?”

Michael turns, blushing, and awkwardly smiles. “Hey, Son. Han.”

“Why are you dressed so…presentable?” Hannibal asks.

Will laughs. “Hannibal, you can’t just—”

His father blushes again. “I was just going to the store, I figured the kids might need some… um…milk?”

Will frowns. “They don’t drink regular milk, Dad.”

“Oh, well I…I figure we need more anyway. Diapers maybe? Yeah, I’ll get diapers. I’ll be back in a few hours!”

He practically runs out the door, and Will stares after him while Emma whines for his attention.

“What was that about?”

“I’m unsure. Your father did get diapers just last night, if I remember correctly. He came back rather happy.”

Will frowns, and turns back to feeding the babies. “Weird.”

“Perhaps…hmm.”

He looks at Hannibal. “What?”

Perhaps he’s found someone he’s interested in?

Will blinks. “What? No. No, he…he’d tell me.”

“It doesn’t mean he’s getting married, or intends to…”

He feels fear rise up fast, along with vomit, and throws down the spoon running towards the nearest toilet. Will throws up, groaning, and hugs the toilet rim as tears sting his eyes.

His father wouldn’t get remarried. He hadn’t ever even dated when Will was growing up, he couldn’t imagine him even *liking* someone that way.

Will lets out several breaths, trying to calm down, and brushes his teeth before throwing water on his face. He puts both hands on his belly, frowning, and sighs.

Maybe it was something else.

But what?

He comes back out to find Hannibal struggling harder to keep up, and sits down to help leaning against him. “Sorry.”

“Don’t apologize, Mielasis. Are you well?”

“Yeah.”

He finishes feeding Emma and Ethan, picking both of them up and giving them breastmilk from bottles as he sits down.

“Will?”

“You really think he’s dating someone?”

“It’s a guess, Will, nothing more.”

“Hmm.”

The babies all fall asleep fast after they eat, and they cuddle together on the couch while Will struggles not to think about what his Dad is doing.

“I can feel your worries, Will. Please, talk to me.”

He sighs. “I just…if he *is* dating someone…we can’t…I don’t know if I can trust him with the kids alone. What if…I mean…if it’s some terrible person they could tell someone and…” he looks at Hannibal, “They could take our babies away.”

Hannibal frowns. “Will, your father loves you more than anything. I do not think he’d put you or any of us in danger.”

He moves in closer and Hannibal puts arms around him. “You don’t know that. He…he was with *her* . He doesn’t exactly have the best judgment of character.”

“Hmm.”

“What’s ‘hmm’ mean?”

“It means hmm,” Hannibal says, smiling against his cheek, “Nothing more.”

Will pokes at their bond, and sees nothing Hannibal is hiding. He sighs.

“We can’t have strangers in our lives anymore,” Will says, “Not…not…not if…”

“I know, Mielasis. I know.”

Hannibal kisses his neck and he sighs, tears stinging the corner of his eyes as he feels Hannibal’s cock against his ass. “I…I can’t. Not till he comes back.”

“I wasn’t asking.”

“I know, but—”

Hannibal turns him onto his back, frowning down at him. “You and I are *one,* Will. I know when you’re hurting and I would never put my own needs over yours. Not ever.”

Will kisses him softly. “I love you.”

“I love you,” Hannibal says, touching down his cheek and stopping at his mating mark, “No matter what you wish to do or where you wish to go, I’m here. Always.”

“I…I know.”

“Good,” Hannibal whispers, pulling him in close again, “For now I want you to rest, and I will not force it on you but you need some rest more than anything. I will wait for your father

and wake you."

"I don't…"

"Please, Will."

He closes his eyes and sighs. "Just for a while."

"Yes, just a short while."

Will doesn't even remember falling asleep, but when he wakes up it's to Hannibal's sudden anger. He nearly sits up when he feels it, and Hannibal holds him tight.

"What's wrong?"

"Your father is in the kitchen," he says, "And he forgot the diapers and…everything else."

Will wipes his eyes, and looks at the curtains. "It's almost dark, how long…are the kids still…"

He sees the babies are in the water swimming, and groans. "You let me sleep too long."

"Never."

"Hannibal, I missed lunch and…"

His stomach growls.

“Your father is making dinner, if you wish to…speak alone…I will wait here.”

Will frowns, touching his belly. “I don’t know.”

“It’s your choice.”

He gets up and stretches, a little sore from their positions, and looks at the closed door.

“Was he upset?”

“When I pointed out that he’d missed everything? Yes.”

Will frowns. “I’ll be right back.”

“Alright.”

He heads into the kitchen, and his father doesn’t turn as he seems determined to make a frozen pizza correctly.

“Dad.”

“I’m almost done.”

“It takes five seconds, just throw it in.”

“I just…”

Will walks over, grabs the pizza pan, and practically throws it into the oven before he closes the door. “There!” he growls, shaking, “It’s done!”

He stands there, claws out, and tries to breathe.

“Son?”

“I…I’m sorry I just…”

“Han told you I forgot everything.”

“Yes.”

He sighs. “I was distracted, I’m sorry Kid. I shouldn’t have been gone so long.”

Will sighs, staring as his hands become human again before he looks up. “Where were you?”

Michael blushes. “I…I decided to go to the gym.”

Will blinks. “The gym?”

He sighs. “Yeah, Kid. The gym. I…I’ve seen how strong Han and you are, and I just…I’ve wanted to get my muscles up just in case…you never know what might come. You know? And I can’t…”

Michael’s voice breaks and Will walks up to him. “Dad.”

He looks at Will with tears in his eyes. “I can’t be a burden if it comes down to saving yourselves. I…I know the government or some whackadoo might show up and could hurt ya and I can’t…I…I can’t have you looking like you did talking about the psycho with those

cages. I…"

Will hugs him, and closes his eyes. "I love you, Dad."

"I love you, Kid. I just…I'm sorry if I was an ass. I should've said something."

Will smiles. "You should've, but it's ok. I was worried, you know?" he laughs, "That maybe you had a girlfriend."

Michael steps back, blushing a bit, and Will frowns. "An old man like me? I'm…not much older than your husband. Am I Han?"

Will turns to see Hannibal in the doorway. "Is everything alright?"

"Yeah, Dad was just…bulking up his muscles."

Hannibal frowns. "Without workout clothes?"

He sighs. "I hid 'em in the car, I didn't want you to say anything."

Hannibal looks at Will.

You're sure you believe this?

I do, yeah.

Alright.

He leaves them again and Will leans on his Dad smiling. “You know, you could just ask Hannibal to fight you or something. I’m sure you’d love to get a few punches in.”

Michael laughs. “Yeah, maybe I will.”

The pizza doesn’t take long, and Hannibal makes the babies their dinner while Will and his father eat. He knows Hannibal will have something else, possibly fishy, and give him some. He feels the eggs flutter across his fingers and smiles.

You can have some too.

His worries had taken him to some dark places, like they always did, but really it was just his family wanting to be together for as long as they possibly could.

“Penny for your thoughts, son?”

He turns. “Nothing, I was just…I…I can’t believe how happy I am.”

Michael smiles. “Good.”

Hannibal returns, and together they fed the kids with help from his Dad. He even helps change diapers, promising to go out in the morning for more swimmers, and rocks Dylan in his arms with a bottle after.

Will watches them, holding Sebastian and Liam while Hannibal finishes up with Beverly, Emma, and Ethan. He suddenly has an urge to go to the lake, all of them, and gets up heading for the door.

“Will?”

He turns. “I want to be on the water.”

Hannibal frowns. “Are you alright?”

He nods. “I just…I want to be on the water. All of us.”

Hannibal looks at his father who frowns back, but the kids all start to shift even before they make it outside. He gets on the boat, waiting, and even in the dark the lake looks beautiful with just the moonlight.

Hannibal turns on a lantern, from where Will doesn’t know, and they pull out into the water with his Dad holding two of the babies.

“So…where are we going?”

“I don’t know,” Will says, “I just…I want to be on the water.”

“Ok.”

Hannibal parks them right near their spot, making Will smile, and he takes Ethan and Emma in his hands as they stare out. Will leans against him with a sigh, and they both shift but don’t move to go into the water.

“You can swim,” His Dad says, “If you want. I’ll just wait here.”

“No,” Hannibal says, “This…I think Will is getting closer and closer to his time. He just wants to be close to home.”

“We’re not close to the house at all.”

Hannibal smiles, pulling Will in close. “Not *that* home, Michael.”

His father is silent as they just watch, and soon the babies are asleep but no one moves.

“I really fucked up keepin’ you from all this, huh?”

Will looks at him and frowns. “Dad…”

“I know I did, Will, I…I know it. I’m sorry.”

“I know.”

Michael looks down at the babies in his arms. “These ones won’t have that trouble, huh?”

“No, they won’t.”

“Good.”

All nine of them sit there, till Will can hardly keep his eyes open, and Michael even hands him the last two babies, letting them just lay there together. Will feels warm, safe, and his babies even come close to his belly touching.

“Da?” Dylan asks, looking at his belly.

“Yeah, sweetie.”

“Da Da!”

Will smiles. “Yeah.”

“Ba ba! Ba ba!”

Will feels tears till his eyes as he touches Dylan’s hands. “Yeah, Dyl…it’s…it’s babies. Like you.”

The other babies start to join in, “Ba ba! Ba ba!” till Will can’t see through his tears.

“Will…”

He leans on Hannibal, and feels the eggs flutter inside him.

“I…I’m just…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Happy.”

“Yeah,” he whispers, “I…I’m happy.”

“And so are they.”

They watch the babies lean against his belly, excited like they just realized it was there, and Will can almost feel how soon there will be more of them.

“It’s close.”

“I know.”

Will and Hannibal look at his Dad, whose face is covered in tears.

“Dad.”

“Some smart kids you got, Son. I…I can’t…I can’t believe…”

Will laughs, and runs his fingers across Dylan’s head. “Neither can I.”

Chapter 99

The nightmares begin just a week shy of a month pregnant.

Will doesn't expect them, not at all, but one minute he's happily settled in his mate's arms and the next he's all alone in the house screaming as *she* comes toward him with a knife. He's lying on the floor, terrified, as she kills his children a second time.

Hannibal's body lies still hunched over the toilet, bleeding onto the ground, and he sees his father in the doorway.

The babies are nowhere to be found.

He lets out an inhuman cry, screaming as he clutches his belly, and Leanne leans down to smile at him.

"He's all mine now," she says, pressing the knife against his neck, "All mine."

Her unhinged smile makes him scream as she lifts up the knife.

"All…mine," she says, laughing, "ALL MINE!"

He wakes up screaming, lashing out against Hannibal, who hugs him tight to his chest as Will sobs.

"Shh," he whispers, kissing his cheek, "Shh…"

"I…can't…I…"

The babies don't wake up the first time, but he suddenly needs them running over to check as he stares into their cribs. Hannibal comes up from behind, holding Will tight, and kisses his mating mark.

"Tell me."

"It…it was just a nightmare."

"Will…"

He pulls away, shaking his head. "It was nothing," he lies, "I…I need some water."

Will heads for the kitchen and drinks three glasses of water trying to get her face out of his head. He wipes tears from his eyes and sighs, putting his glass out to dry, and turns to see Hannibal waiting.

"Will, do not run from me."

He fakes a smile. "I'm fine," he lies, "It was just a nightmare."

Hannibal frowns. "You were screaming," he says, "You…you were frightened, I could feel it in our bond."

Will comes up and hugs him, sighing deeply. "Nightmares are scary."

He feels Hannibal's hand rub his back and closes his eyes. "Yes, I know," he says, "I've had them myself, but…you've never…you can tell me anything, Mielasis. You know that."

Will looks up at him and frowns. “I know, but I’m fine. It’s nothing.”

It’s not nothing.

The nightmare returns every night for four straight days, twice waking up the babies who cling to Will like they know something Hannibal doesn’t. He falls asleep with them in his old bed both nights before he wakes on the fifth day to only Hannibal beside him.

He sits up, frowning. “Where…”

“Your father is feeding them,” he says, “You and I need to have a discussion.”

Will looks down at himself.

“I’m fine.”

“Will, you are *not* fine and you know it. This has gone on for nearly a week, and now the children are struggling with your upset. If you will not tell me the cause of this dream, I will have to ask you to sleep separately from us until you’ve resolved your fears.”

Will blinks. “What?”

Hannibal sighs, rubbing his eyes. “It’s not good for them,” he says, “They can feel your upset through the parent bond and it’s…it scares them too.”

He blinks back tears. “They might still feel it, they…”

“They didn’t the first nights this began, and your screams woke them. Will…”

He gets up from the bed, pulling off his clothes, and struggling not to cry. “Fine,” he says, his voice shaking, “I don’t need you, I can…I can sleep just fine. I…”

Will tries to grab new clothes and starts to shake, letting out a sob, and Hannibal is there to catch him before he falls to his knees. He carries him back to bed, nuzzling and scenting his neck.

"Talk to me, Mielasis. Please."

He closes his eyes tight and shakes his head. "I…I…"

"Will," he says, kissing the tears from his face, "Please. This isn't just scaring the children outside your body, the eggs…Will, please."

He buries his face against Hannibal's neck and whimpers.

"L…Leanne," he whispers, his voice shaking, "I keep…I keep dreaming she…she's killing them again and you and Dad and…the babies…I can't find the babies I never find the…"

Hannibal's grip tightens, and he lets out a long breath, running fingers through Will's hair.

"Will, she's gone. I promise you, she's gone."

Will growls, pulling back and nodding. "I KNOW!" he yells, "I…I know, but she…she's still HERE!" he taps his head, "SHE'S HERE AND SHE WON'T STOP! SHE…she just…she won't…"

Hannibal puts both hands on his face, shifting, and Will does the same without even trying.

"She's GONE, Will. She cannot hurt you, or us ever again."

“But…”

“No,” Hannibal says, shaking his head, “I want you to listen to me, this phantom has returned because you fear giving birth this second time. It wants you to fail, it…it feeds on your fears. You cannot let the ghost of your mother win. You didn’t before, remember? You fought, and you saved our children. You can do so in your dreams as well, you just…you have to remember.”

Will lets out a sob, hugging him, and Hannibal holds him tight. He can’t seem to stop, tears streaming down his face, and it doesn’t take long for him to start to drift.

“Sleep well, Mielasis. I will be here.”

“I love you.”

“I love you.”

His dream isn’t the same this time.

Will is in a different house, a bigger house, and he’s making peanut butter strawberry sandwiches while the sounds of the kids playing in the next room makes him smile. He rubs his belly, trying to find a plate, and turns to see Leanne standing in the middle of the kitchen.

He freezes up as she pulls a knife, bigger than the others, and walks toward him.

“Willie, Willie, Willie,” she says, shaking her head, “You thought you could get away with it, didn’t you? You thought I’d…I’d *let you* take my Hanni. He *loves me,* we were gonna have a BABY and YOU…” she rushes forward, pushing him against the wall as plates crash to the floor breaking into pieces, “...YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD TAKE HIM FROM ME! HE’S—”

Will growls, shifting, and her eyes widen as he grabs hold of her neck.

“HE’S MINE! ALL MINE!”

She struggles, pushing him off, and he clutches his belly glaring as she tries to come for him again.

But she doesn’t make it this time.

“HELP! SOMEBODY HELP ME!”

The door opens and to Will’s relief Hannibal and his father come into the kitchen. He watches as Hannibal grips Leanne from behind, and his father leans down to pick up the knife dropped to the floor. He hands it to Will.

“Here you go, Son.”

Will walks up, eyes filled with tears, and slits her throat watching the life drain out of her eyes.

“MINE.”

They drop her, and Will runs to Hannibal who holds him tight.

“The babies, I need to…”

“Da?”

He looks at the floor, and there struggling to walk are his children.

They're fine.

They're just fine.

Will wakes up on his own this time, tears on his cheeks, and finds Hannibal awake beside him. He kisses him softly, and Hannibal sighs, opening his eyes before he smiles at Will.

"Will."

"She's gone," Will says, sniffling, "She…she's gone."

Hannibal wipes the tears from his cheeks.

"I know."

Will blinks. "What?"

Hannibal shakes his head. "I…I could feel your fears, and your…triumphs. I may not have been there, but I felt them just the same."

He wipes his eyes, and leans over him. "I'm sorry."

"I know."

"I just…I didn't know what to do, and I…I didn't…I wanted her gone. I didn't want even the idea of her to touch you, at all, it was….stupid. I'm sorry."

“Will, I know. You’re forgiven. I apologize for issuing such an ultimatum to upset you before, I should not have threatened to separate you from the children. It was uncalled for, and I…”

Will sighs. “I needed it,” he says, “And I…I need them. Right now.”

“I will get them,” Hannibal says, “Just…”

The door opens with a bang, and there standing in the doorway is his father looking overwhelmed.

“They were trying to crawl down the hallway and I couldn’t keep up! Sorry, Son, but I…have you been crying?”

Will smiles. “Yeah, but I’m ok Dad. Really.”

He frowns as he brings over Dylan and Emma to the bed while Hannibal helps get the others.

“You’re sure?”

“Yeah,” Will says, as the babies come crawling over to snuggle close, “I just…I had a nightmare again.”

“I’ve been hearing you all week,” he says, sitting on the edge of the bed, “But I didn’t…I know I’m not really what you need for nightmares anymore,” he says, sitting on the edge of the bed.

“Dad…”

He pats Will's leg. "It's ok, Will, I might not be able to comfort you from nightmares anymore," he says, flexing his arms, "But I'm building up muscles just in case you need me for anything else."

Will laughs. "Let's hope not, ok? For now I just…need my family."

Will smiles at Hannibal, putting a hand on his belly, and then curls up next to his children.

"And you got us, Son," His Dad says, "You're ok now, though? No more nightmares?"

"I'm ok, Dad," he says, kissing each baby's head one by one, "I just…I needed to ask for help, that was all."

"I'm glad you did, Son," his Dad says, "I'm glad you did."

Will looks at Hannibal. "So am I."

Hannibal entwines their fingers, and Will can feel their bond strong between them. He hums, and Hannibal's eyes go red as he does the same.

"I'm just gonna…I'll start lunch. You two just…do whatever you need."

Will moves closer, the kids clutching him, and sighs as he presses down on his belly feeling the eggs flutter.

"Thank you," he says, taking Hannibal's hand and putting it on his belly, "For…for…for not letting me hide."

"Will…"

“I didn’t want to upset you,” he says, “I didn’t…I wanted to put her behind us, like we said we did, and I felt like you’d be upset. I didn’t…”

Hannibal leans over to kiss his cheeks. “I’m here, Will. Always. I never let you hide from me long, did I? Why would I start now?”

Will laughs. “Always pushing me,” he says, kissing his shifted hand, “Always…always there waiting for me to…come back again.”

“Always.”

Will moves in closer, and he does the same, the babies the only thing between them.

“Our family may grow but we…we started this together. Our bond will never not be the center of it.”

“I love you,” Will says, “I…I love you so much.”

“I love you, Will, too much to even lay an amount to.”

He laughs again and sighs. “If I fall asleep again, wake me?”

“As you wish.”

Will feels the eggs flutter as he turns onto his side, and the babies clutch at him harder.

Soon.

He could feel it.

Just how soon?

He had no idea.

Chapter 100

They take the babies on another swim only a few days later, all six of them crawling to the water despite Will's worries, and Hannibal waiting to make him feel better.

"You're sure about this?"

"Will, they can swim better than most, and we're both here. There's nothing to worry about."

Will always worries, he can't help it, but he wades in the water before swimming over to Hannibal who shifts with ease. He does the same, leaning against his mate, and then the babies all start to rush.

Dylan hits the water first, followed by Beverly, then Emma, Ethan, Liam, and then Sebastian. Will goes under to greet them, their hands reaching out for his touch, and he smiles at how at ease they are in the water.

And they always will be.

Will turns to smile at Hannibal under the water.

Can we go further?

We can go as far as you want.

They swim together, slower this time than the last, and something compels Will to keep going. He feels the eggs flutter in his belly as he moves, unsure, and some of the babies even latch onto his back.

Mielasis?

I just…I need to…

We'll follow.

He's tired when they stop, and hungry, moving to rise to the surface but something catches his eye.

It's a big fish, quicker than most, but he suddenly growls rushing forward to grab it with his claws. Will bites down, breaking it in half, and he feels the babies leave his back as he devours what's in his hands.

Will? Will, look.

He turns, shaking, and to his shock sees the babies taking the pieces he let fall. Will swallows, wiping his mouth, while Hannibal helps the babies take what they need.

They…is it ok?

Hannibal smiles. *They're growing, Mielasis. It's more than ok, it's a sign of good health.*

Will has tears in his eyes as he watches the babies, some of which suddenly start to reach out for passing fish, and he moves to stop them but Hannibal takes his hand.

Don't.

They could get hurt! They—

The babies work as a team, sharing their kill, and Will knows the scene should terrify him but he's so proud he could burst.

Hannibal kisses his cheek.

They're fine.

They resurface after, the water washing away any trace, and they each take three babies as they step out.

Will blinks when he realizes where they are.

"The house."

Hannibal frowns. "I thought you knew."

He shakes his head.

His weird compulsion somehow brought him to the "other" house, and the silence makes him let out a long breath.

"No one's working today?"

Hannibal shakes his head, and pulls Will in close as the babies crawl around them.

"I thought perhaps we'd come see the house today, so I didn't want anyone around."

Will smiles. “You thought I’d want to come, you mean?”

“No,” he says, “I just…I wanted to show you how close we are. Come, we can shower inside.”

“You just happen to have your keys?”

Hannibal smiles. “I won’t need them.”

They walk to the door, where to Will’s amusement Hannibal reaches up to pull down a hidden key. Will holds the babies close, though they are a little fussy, and Dylan claws at his back to be let down.

“No, c’mon now Dyl just…”

“It’s fine,” Hannibal says, “Let them go.”

Will frowns. “There’s construction around, it’s not safe.”

“I promise, it’s safe.”

He lets them go, and Hannibal brings him to the hallway he remembers from the last time he was here. It’s longer now, wider, and the rooms are bigger too.

“I thought of adding an addition,” he says, “But the children prefer to be together. This seemed better.”

There’s three new rooms off the back, half finished but safe to go through, and Will smiles as they walk inside.

“I like it.”

Hannibal hugs him and kisses his cheek. “Good.”

There’s two new bathrooms, and a large open room at the end of the hall that Will frowns at as they draw closer.

“What’s…”

Hannibal brings him inside, and he blinks.

“It’s going to take longer to finish,” Hannibal says, “But…I think it will be worth it in the end.”

His eyes fill with tears. “Hannibal…”

The babies come up to the edge and Will gasps, grabbing them, and Hannibal does the same.

It’s the largest addition, bigger than half the house, and he would never have seen it from the lake. Their very own indoor pool.

“I imagine we’ll be able to move in sometime over the next few months, just to be sure, and of course any decorating would come after for the childrens’ rooms and anything else. I…”

Will smiles. “I love you.”

He smiles. “I love you.”

Will leans in as close as he can with a large belly and three kids in his arms. “And I love it. I can’t wait.”

Hannibal kisses him softly, brushing his fingers across Will’s cheek. “That makes me very happy to hear.”

Will grins. “So…shower or…another long swim?”

“We can stay the night, if you’d like, but the children would have to stay in our bed.”

“And there’s no milk or food or diapers.”

Hannibal wipes his finger across Dylan’s mouth, and the blood there makes Will laugh. “I think we have plenty of food nearby, if need be. What do you want, Will?”

Will moves in closer to kiss him again. “I want to be with my mate, and my kids. Just us.”

“Then that is what we will do.”

They give the babies baths, though Will has to wrap them up in what little towels Hannibal has and put on old shirts for them to wear to bed while Hannibal calls for reinforcements.

“The diapers will be here in…forty five minutes.”

Will frowns. “I don’t know if they’ll wait that long.”

Hannibal shrugs. “Accidents happen, I suppose, there’s no need to worry.”

Will brings the babies into their bed, one by one, and they clutch at him happily while Hannibal lays at his side.

“It’s been a long day, but I…I am still a little hungry. Maybe we can order something?”

Hannibal smiles. “I will return.”

“What? No I…”

He kisses Will’s hand, and shakes his head. “I will return.”

Will feels oddly excited as he nods, and Hannibal leaves them alone in the house to bring him something to eat. The babies are tired out, obviously, and even he’s starting to drift despite how it’s barely seven.

“Don’t fall asleep yet,” he says, though they’re already starting, “Just…wait. Okay? Not long now.”

They whimper, grabbing at him, and he lays down as they crawl up fast. It’s painful when they suckle, their teeth now too strong, but he doesn’t stop them as tears fill his eyes.

“Daddy loves you,” he says, “I…I love you so much.”

“Da,” the word echoes from them all, grabbing at him, and he laughs.

“Da,” he says, “I…I’ll always be your Da.”

Hannibal returns after a while, still wet when he looks in on them, and he frowns.

“Are you in pain?”

Will shakes his head. “I’m fine.”

“I can order milk or…”

“No, it’s fine.”

Hannibal smiles. “The order is coming soon.”

“Good, because all this milk and fish is gonna hit them sooner or later.”

“I’ll start your fish.”

“No, it’s…I can eat it raw.”

“Allow me the pleasure, I’ve missed the kitchen.”

“Ok.”

Will drifts a little, on and off, but wakes to Hannibal pulling the babies off one by one to give them diapers.

“How long was I out?”

“Not long,” he says.

“I can help, I just—”

“Allow me.”

Will sighs and rolls onto his side. “Ok.”

It takes longer with just Hannibal, but soon the babies have diapers and curl up together fast. He smiles, brushing their heads, and Hannibal does the same.

“They’re like puppies,” he jokes, “I’ve never…is it always like this?”

Hannibal frowns. “Misha and I were close, even far apart in age. Everything is different with our kind.”

Will feels a tear fall down his cheek. “I’m glad they have each other.”

“As am I.”

He lays back down and smiles. “How’s the fish?”

“Warming in the oven.”

“Bring it to me.”

“As you wish.”

Will rubs his belly when the babies flutter again, poking, and he sits up with a groan.

“Be nice,” he mumbles, “Daddy needs some food and maybe even…something else. You know, it’s not…”

A sudden gush makes him gasp, and he feels the bed get wet as he stares down.

“HANNIBAL!”

Hannibal is there so fast Will barely has time to worry, and the babies start to cry.

“Will, it’s…”

“I need water,” he says, shaking, “I need….I need a tub, I…”

Hannibal lifts him fast, racing to the connected bathroom, and he starts the water in the large tub while Will feels more water leave him.

“They’re coming,” he gasps, “I…it’s…they’re coming.”

“Yes, they are,” Hannibal says, kissing him as he touches Will’s cheek, “Are you well?”

Will smiles. “Yeah, I just…this is the worst timing, isn’t it?”

“Or the best. Perhaps they know they’re home.”

Will laughs as tears blur his vision. “Home is where you all are, it doesn’t…” he groans, “Help me get inside.”

The water is cold when he lays down, just as he wants, and he sighs leaning back against the tub wall.

Hannibal goes to kneel down, and Will shakes his head. “We need to call Dad, and…oh god do you have a phone? We don’t have our phones…and the babies! I…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek, and is gone again so fast Will barely has time to miss him when he returns with all six babies in his arms. “Do you want them in the water?”

“Yes,” Will says, “I…yes.”

The tub is much bigger this time, enough room for all of them, and the babies move around happily coming closer.

“Hey babies, it’s…you’re about to become big brothers and sisters.”

They touch his belly, staying close, and Hannibal kneels down.

“I will not miss it this time,” he says, “Your father can be called after, this is…ours.”

Will grabs his hand.

“I love you.”

“And I love you.”

He groans when another gush comes, more this time, and to his shock it’s not just water.

Four eggs come up, bigger than his last, and he bursts into tears. “They…”

Hannibal smiles. “They’re here.”

It goes that way for hours, slowly, and without pain.

How it’s supposed to be.

Will is sobbing by the end, overwhelmed, and Hannibal brushes the sweat from his brow with each new burst of eggs. “You’re doing so well, Mielasis. So well.”

“I…I…I don’t…”

“Shh…”

The babies are upset to see him in pain, he knows, so he keeps them close even as they fall asleep against him. He looks out at the eggs in the water as Hannibal kisses his cheek and smiles as they look out at their eggs. “I can’t see,” he says, his eyes heavy, “How many?”

“Eleven.”

Will smiles as Hannibal . “Not enough for a football team, but…pretty….close.”

Hannibal smiles. “There’s always room for more.”

Will laughs, and leans back exhausted as Hannibal nuzzles his cheek. “Speak for yourself,” he mumbles, “I’m not sure I can do this again.”

He pulls back and stares into Will's eyes. "It's your choice," he says, "Not mine."

Will sighs and kisses him softly. "We'll see what happens."

They both turn again, and Will leans out to touch every one of the eggs. They flutter, moving under his hand, and tears fill his eyes.

"I…"

He feels another gush come and he gasps, grabbing Hannibal's arm. "Will?"

A single egg comes up from under the water, right at the front of the rest, and Will reaches out to touch. It's smaller than the others, but flutters all the same.

"Twelve," he says, "I…I guess it's twelve."

Hannibal touches the last egg as well, and Will leaves his hand over it as Hannibal kisses his forehead.

"Welcome home, little ones," he says, touching each egg again, "At last."

Will sighs, and hugs the babies at his sides as tears fall down his cheeks. "I'm…I'm so happy."

Hannibal hugs him again. "As am I, Mielasis. As am I."

Chapter 101

Will falls asleep faster than he expects, so content he hardly wants to move, and though there's no room for Hannibal in the tub, their bond thrums stronger than ever. He wakes up in the dark, reaching for the closest eggs, and letting out a long breath.

They're real.

It wasn't a dream.

His night vision isn't strong enough to see much, but he reaches out to feel for the babies who to his delight are floating between their new siblings. Will smiles, reaching out to touch every single one, and suddenly feels Hannibal.

"They would not leave them," he says, reaching to touch Will's shoulder, "I thought to move them with me to the bed, but they wanted to be here."

Will frowns. "Wait, are you sleeping on the floor?"

"It's uncomfortable, but…"

"No, no, no…don't do that," he says, "I…you can't…"

Hannibal leans over further and presses a kiss to his cheek. "I can do what I please, Mielasis."

Will sighs and grabs his wrist leaning in to kiss him again. "I want you in here with us."

“There’s little room, Will, I’m perfectly fine where I am. I don’t wish to disturb the children.”

He hums, nuzzling Hannibal’s cheek. “I love you.”

“And I love you.”

“We need that pool.”

Hannibal smiles against his cheek. “I know.”

“I…”

“It’s best if you return to rest,” he whispers, gently coaxing Will back where he’d been in the tub, “I’m here…if you need me.”

Will sighs, still grasping his hand as his eyes grow heavy. “Sing to me.”

Hannibal kisses his hand, and hums their song while Will tiredly joins in. It’s quiet this time, barely a whisper, but Will feels it to his core.

“Don’t leave.”

“Never.”

He wakes again with sun coming through the high windows and illuminating Hannibal who still leans half against Will’s shoulder with his eyes wide open.

“Hi.”

Hannibal smiles. “Hello.”

Will squeezes his hand. “You stayed.”

“I did.”

“All night?”

“All night.”

“Hannibal…you didn’t…you didn’t need to…stay.”

He kisses Will’s cheek. “Where else would I go?”

Will closes his eyes as a tear falls down his cheek. “We’re gonna figure out how to fit us all in here today. I’m not…I can’t sit here another night without you.”

Hannibal smiles. “I’m having the pool filled as we speak.”

He pulls him in closer again, and kisses his cheeks, nuzzling as he sighs. “God, I love you.”

Hannibal hums. “And I love you.”

He pulls back, smiling at him, and before they can kiss again he hears the babies start to wake.

“Duty calls.”

“I will get breakfast,” Hannibal says, kissing him again, “For all of us.”

“But…”

“No one will come inside, I promise you.”

Will frowns. “Ok.”

“Trust me, Will. I have everything under control.”

He gets up, stretching, and turns to leave when Will calls out again.

“Wait!”

Hannibal frowns. “What is it?”

“We have to call my dad,” Will says, “He’s gotta be freaking out, we’ve been gone way too long.”

He nods. “I will make certain he’s notified.”

“You don’t have a phone.”

Hannibal smiles. “There are other means of communication, Will. I promise I’ll be sure he knows, and perhaps he can bring some things we need.”

Will settles. “Ok.”

“I will return.”

He looks away as Hannibal leaves, picking up the babies to bring them closer, and they already start to suckle again. Will winces, falling back, and reaches for his floating eggs as the babies nurse.

It’s something he’s missed, this closeness, and as he runs his hand over each egg he wonders how he’ll do the same with twelve.

“Go easy on me,” he sighs, “Ok?”

The eggs flutter, naturally, rolling in the water as he smiles.

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

He gasps when Dylan bites him and pulls his son off with a frown. “No, no,” he scolds, “This is why you’re too big to do this to Dada.”

“Da,” Dylan says, reaching out with both arms, “Da!”

Will sighs. “Be nice.”

Dylan rushes forward again, grabbing hold, and he winces but settles back. He’s not sure how long they lay there in the water, but when Hannibal returns the babies are still suckling.

“You spoil them.”

Will smiles. “Always.”

Hannibal pulls each one of them off, their cries burning into Will, and he sits them on the floor of the bathroom. “Their diapers need changing, and they need to eat what I’ve made us.”

“Eggs?”

“Eggs and fish,” Hannibal says, handing him a plate.

“Go swimming again?”

“This particular fish is from my reserves,” he says, “As you recall I never left you last night.”

Will’s heart skips a beat. “I remember.”

He takes a bite, his eyes closing as he sighs. “God, that’s good.”

“Thank you,” Hannibal purrs, “Now I must change their diapers.”

“I can help,” he mumbles, leaning over to set down his plate, “I…”

“No, Will. Please finish. You need your strength.”

“Ok.”

“I’ve taken the liberty of messaging your father, he’s on his way and will be acquiring play pens? He thinks it will help.”

Will frowns. “I’m not sure I like that, it’s pretty much the same as those wooden prisons back at the other house.”

Hannibal smiles as he changes Emma’s diaper. “If you’re averse, we will not use them.”

“Ok.”

It takes a bit longer to change them, especially with food nearby, and Hannibal struggles but doesn’t ask for help. He gives the babies a large plate full of cut up eggs and fish, which they excitedly attack before Hannibal leans against the tub.

“Well, that’s one thing off my list.”

Will smiles. “One of how many?”

“Fourteen. Though I could merge a few together, it’s much more efficient not to separate.”

“Mmm,” Will sighs, leaning back as Hannibal runs a hand down his back.

“Are you growing tired again?”

“No, I…I’m fine.”

“Take a dip in the water,” he whispers, kissing Will’s cheek, “You need it.”

“But my food will get cold.”

Hannibal takes the last of Will’s eggs in his hand and brings it up for Will to eat. Like always food tastes better from his mate’s fingers, and Will licks them after his whole body warming as he sees Hannibal’s red eyes.

“Don’t.”

He smiles. “I cannot control my need for you, Will, I can only…postpone it.”

He blushes. “I probably look like shit, I’m all sweaty and I probably smell I…”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “You look perfect.”

The babies finish, raising their hands up to be helped back into the water, and they come to Will instantly. He sighs, his eyes growing heavier, and Hannibal kisses his mouth softly.

“Sleep, Meilasis. I promise you that I have things under control.”

Will falls asleep again fast, going half under, and when he wakes up again it’s not Hannibal he sees beside him.

“Hi Dad.”

Michael smiles as he keeps his hand just over the tub’s edge. “Hey Kid. How are you feeling? You scared the shit outta me last night.”

“I’m sorry, we didn’t…”

“I know, I know,” he says, “Han told me what happened. I’m just glad you were close to here and everything went alright. Can I…?”

Will nods as his father touches some of the eggs, but they don’t flutter under his fingers.

“I remember it took a while for the others to be warm to me,” he jokes, “It’s ok.”

Will smiles. “They’ll love you.”

He looks at Will. “You alright?”

“Yeah, just tired.”

“You can go back to sleep, I just…”

Will sits up suddenly when he realizes he’s alone in the tub with the eggs. “Where are the babies?”

“Han’s got ‘em in the bedroom asleep in the playpens. I brought some stuff for you both from the house.”

His lip curls. “I don’t like the playpen idea.”

“Son, if I could break down the fancy cribs I would’ve. We won’t use them around you.”

He frowns and reaches out to touch the eggs one by one. “Hannibal is staying with them?”

“Yes.”

“The pool?”

“Nearly full, I checked myself. Your man sure got lots done here, huh? I didn’t see what it looked like before but…it’s nice.”

Will smiles a little. “Yeah, he did.”

Michael puts his hand on Will’s shoulder and gives it a squeeze. “You’re gonna be happy here, Kid. I know it.”

He feels tears in the corner of his eyes. “I do too.”

The door opens and Hannibal stands there holding the babies in his arms. “Are we interrupting?”

“Nope,” his Dad sighs, “I’m gonna take a walk.”

Will watches him go, and Hannibal brings the babies over to put them in the tub once again.

“How is the pool?”

“Nearly finished.”

“Mmm.”

“What did…”

A low vibration makes him pause, and Hannibal suddenly pulls out Will’s phone from his pocket.

“I almost forgot this,” he says, “Your father says it’s been ringing nonstop.”

Will looks down.

It’s Bev.

“Hey Bev, I…”

“Jesus Christ, Graham!” she sighs, “I was terrified! Are you alright?”

Will smiles at Hannibal. “I’m more than alright,” he says, “I…I have new tadpoles.”

Bev is quiet.

“Oh Will…oh god I want to see them. Can we come see them?”

He smiles. “Tomorrow?”

Bev sighs. “I have to wait that long?”

“Just…it’s not that long, Bev, and if you wait till tomorrow...you can come swimming in the new pool.”

Bev blinks. “Pool?”

“And you can see the new house.”

“Ohhh! Oh wow you…YES! We will be there tomorrow, and you’d better believe we’re bringing so much stuff! Oh god you didn’t tell me how many! How many are there? Seven? Eight? Nine?”

Will reaches out to put his hands over some of the eggs.

“Twelve.”

“TWELVE?”

“CHIYOH GET UP HERE! Oh my god, oh Will! I’m…I’m so happy for you.”

Will can hardly see through his tears. “Thank you, Bev. I…I love you.”

“And I love you. Give the babes and the tadpoles all the hugs and kisses for us. Okay?”

“We will.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Bye,” he says, “I…I can’t wait to see you.”

“Bye.”

He wipes his face as Hannibal takes the phone, and watches his mate move around like he’s unsure of where to go.

“Are you ok?”

“Yes, I…does the water need changing?”

Will shakes his head.

“Are you hungry? I can…”

He shakes his head.

Hannibal frowns, standing there looking awkward. “Well then, I suppose I…”

Will pulls him down, nearly half into the tub, and he doesn’t argue even as the water splashes what looks like a very nice shirt. “Stay,” he says, nuzzling Hannibal’s cheek.

Hannibal hums. “As you wish,” he says, as they watch the babies go right by the eggs again.

It’s both worrying and wonderful to see them interact, and Will laughs when Sebastian stares at one oddly.

“It’s ok, Sebby,” Will says, “They’re nice, see?”

He rubs the egg, and it flutters making Sebastian laugh. He does the same, and the egg flutters again.

“Fast friends,” Will says, wiping sudden tears that well up in his eyes again, “I…I think…I think they’ll all get along great.”

Hannibal smiles. “Oh yes,” he says, “I imagine they’ll all be close, even those older, it’s… going to be…it will be…”

Will turns his cheek and they stare into each other’s eyes as he touches Hannibal’s face.

“Fun? Perfect? Exciting? Amazing? L…”

“Interesting,” Hannibal says, kissing the side of Will’s nose. “And quite exhausting.”

Will laughs.

“You wanted a football team.”

“I said no such thing.”

He laughs again, and kisses Hannibal softly. “Ok, fine. Maybe I did.”

Hannibal brushes fingers across his cheek. “All I wanted was children with you. One, ten, one thousand…it would not matter the number. I just…I had to have you and only you.”

Will’s vision goes red, and he purrs. “I felt the same way.”

They kiss again, deeper this time, and Will never wants to stop. He digs his nails into Hannibal's cheek, feeling him shiver, and whimpers as Hannibal pulls him in closer again.

Mine .

Will pushes all the love he can through their bond and feels Hannibal do the same.

Mine.

They pull back, both gasping, and Hannibal smiles.

"Thirsty?"

Will laughs and leans down to pick up water in his hands that he deliberately uses to wet Hannibal's fancy shoes. Hannibal doesn't move, but Will can see tears in his eyes.

"I won't apologize this time," he says, kissing him again.

Hannibal shakes his head, his fingers brushing Will's cheek.

"No need to apologize, Mielasis," he says, "They're only shoes."

Will feels his chest ache as he remembers everything like it's the first time.

"I think," he says, pulling Hannibal in closer, "I think we're gonna have an amazing life."

Hannibal takes Will’s hands in his and kisses them both as he leans in.close.

“So do I, Mielasis. So do I.”

Chapter 102

Epilogue

A loud crash is what wakes Will up from his nap on the porch, and he rubs his eyes before setting his book down.

“DAD! DAD SEBASTIAN IS BEING MEAN!”

He sits up, rolling his eyes, and heads for the source of his headache.

Eighteen children were never something Will thought he’d have, and yet as he walks into the house he’s instantly reminded that he does.

There’s a fight happening between one of his oldest, Sebastian, and one of his youngest, Quinn, whose recent growth spurt has made them one of Will’s tallest children. Quinn also reminds him the most of Hannibal, which is both a good thing and a bad one.

“Quinn, what did you do?”

“ME?” Quinn growls, “Seb is the one who took my —“

“You said I could borrow it!”

“I SAID BORROW NOT BREAK! I…”

Quinn shifts, rushing at his brother, who does the same till they crash into the wall knocking down two paintings by his oldest Dylan who like many of their kids took after Hannibal.

Will watches, his anger rising, and finally lets out a long growl making everyone in the living room freeze.

“STOP THIS RIGHT NOW! GO TO YOUR ROOM!”

Quinn shifts back, keeping his head down, and looks at Will with the same sad eyes he’s used his whole life. Now, nearly ten years later, he’s still able.

Will can never say no to his children, and they know it.

“I’m sorry Da,” he says, “I didn’t mean to get upset.”

Will sighs. “I know, baby, I know. Just…don’t let your brother borrow anything anymore,” he turns to Sebastian, “And?”

“Sorry.”

Both of them glare at each other and go to opposite rooms down the hall.

Many of the kids still room together, even as teens, but there’s some that just don’t get along.

They were born so close together, and yet there’s still a hierarchy he didn’t expect.

Will sighs, rubbing his neck, and before he can even groan Hannibal appears to practically lift him to a chair.

“I’m not an invalid,” he mumbles with a sigh, “I can walk.”

Hannibal frowns. “I know it, Meilasis, but…I don’t like to see you in pain.”

Will smiles as he leans down, and they kiss softly. “You don’t need to still spoil me after all this time, it’s not…we know I’m not pregnant so sadly this is just old age.”

“Will,” he smiles, “You’re only twenty six.”

He smiles. “Apparently that’s when half sea monsters get old.”

Hannibal sits on the edge of his chair. “I’m many years past that, and I don’t consider…”

A loud groan makes them both look up to see Emma and Ethan sitting on the couch reading.

“Can you flirt somewhere else?” Ethan mumbles, “It’s gross.”

“Totally.”

Will glares at them. “You’ll get there soon enough.”

Emma makes a face. “Oh god, no. I’m not gonna lie to some human to have a baby. No way. I’ll stay eggless till I die, thank you.”

“Same,” Ethan mumbles, “Who wants to do that?”

Will frowns.

“It’s not…that’s not…”

Hannibal smiles. “Will, it’s…not the time.”

He leans back in the chair, and Hannibal grabs his hand.

“You know, I honestly thought all those stories we told them when they were kids…that it would…I dunno. Make them want to find their mate.”

Hannibal frowns. “Some of them do, I know Dylan is looking forward to it, as is Beverly. Aria and Adriana…”

“Dad?”

Both of them turn and see Adam standing beside them, frowning. The sweetest of their second set of twins, Adam usually doesn’t cause trouble, which is why Will is instantly worried.

“What is it, Adam?”

He squeezes his hands, biting his lip. “I…I have to tell you something.”

Will frowns. “What’s wrong?”

He sighs. “I think…Aiden…he might get in trouble so…I wasn’t gonna say anything but…he brought it inside now.”

Hannibal squeezes Will’s hand. “He brought…what…inside?”

A loud yell makes them all freeze.

“OH MY GOD IS THAT A DOG?”

Will’s blood runs cold, and loud barking starts to echo down the hallway as six of their children run out at once. Sara, Jesse, Maya, Zoe, Shannan, and Colleen are all laughing excitedly as Aiden tries to chase down a brown puppy.

He stands up in tears as Hannibal wraps his arms around him. “Will…”

“I…I can’t…”

“Will, breathe.”

“I…”

The puppy gets scooped up right as Aiden gets in their view, and he freezes.

“Da?”

“Aiden,” Hannibal says, “You know the rules.”

“I know, but…”

“Aiden.”

Will blinks back tears as the puppy in his son’s arms licks his face.

“But, he likes me Da, and I like him.”

He closes his eyes, and Hannibal hugs him tighter. “Aiden, take the dog outside.”

“But…”

“Aiden, take the dog outside NOW!” Hannibal growls, making Will feel his children’s fear in their bond.

Aiden’s eyes fill with tears. “It’s not fair,” he says, sniffling, “It’s not…”

You could hear a pin drop once he’s gone, and Hannibal attempts to comfort Will but he pulls away. “I…I have to…I gotta talk to him.”

“Will, it’s not necessary.”

Will looks around the room, noticing Micheal and Dylan are now there looking just as scared.

“Look at them,” he says, his voice shaking, “They…I never…we need to talk to them.”

The kids all come closer now, the same need they’ve had since birth to comfort him making Will’s tears get worse.

“I’m ok, I’m ok, I…”

Even Emma and Ethan come closer, their eyes filled with tears, and Will can't take this anymore.

"Get your brother, Adam. Please?"

Adam nods, and runs for the door while Will and Hannibal settle back in the chair.

"I'm ok, I promise."

Beverly grabs Will's wrist. "Your heart is beating so fast, Da."

"I just…"

The door slams and in comes Aiden with Adam looking angrier than when he left. He crosses his arms but makes no move to be near Will as Adam kneels by his siblings.

"Aiden."

"He likes me!" Aiden says, so upset his voice breaks, "I…I'll take care of him! His name is Bubbles and he likes to swim! I…he's so small, Da, he needs me!"

Will leans against Hannibal who hums, making him calm.

"I know we always told you all that I…I don't like dogs so we couldn't have pets. I know that."

Adam frowns. "I don't need a dog, Da. I don't like dogs either."

Aiden glares at him. “Shut up Adam!”

All of the others growl at the same time, glaring at Aiden, and Will’s chest hurts.

“Just…all of you…stop. Please listen. Aiden, baby, I…someone tried to take me away from Dad, way back before any of you were born. He…he used a dog, and I…they upset me. I can’t stop thinking about him when I…god I loved dogs when I was younger this isn’t…god I’m sorry. I just…”

Will lets out a sob as he breaks away from Hannibal and runs outside, covering his mouth as he rushes to the edge of the lake. He sobs, trying not to let them hear, and shifts without even trying.

The memories, everything, rushes back, and he pulls off his shirt ready to swim away when a tiny bark makes him pause. Bubbles is so small, practically too small to be away from his mother, and the poor thing looks terrified.

Will doesn’t have it in himself to push the poor thing away as it licks his hand on the grass, and lets out another sob.

“Oh god, shit.”

“Will?”

He turns as Hannibal comes running, and takes Bubbles into his arms.

“I will take him to a shelter,” he says, “You won’t have to deal with this.”

Will wipes his eyes as he shakes his head. “I’ll just have to deal with my son hating me.”

“Will…”

He sniffles, and with shaking fingers reaches out to touch Bubbles’s head. He’s soft for a mutt, his golden coat speckled with brown, and his eyes are a light blue.

“He’s adorable,” Will says, his vision blurred as the tears keep coming, “God he’s so cute.”

“Will…you don’t have to do this.”

He reaches up and takes the dog from Hannibal, who sits beside him in the grass. He holds Bubbles close, and the puppy nuzzles him. “He’s so cold.”

“Will…”

“Da?”

Will turns and sees Aiden standing behind him in tears. “Aiden.”

“We don’t have to,” he says, his voice breaking, “I don’t need a dog, Da. I…I just…I have lots of other stuff and…”

Will reaches out and Aiden throws his arms around him burying his face against Will’s neck.

“It’s ok, baby, I’m ok.”

“I’m sorry, Da,” he whimpers, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m…”

Will sees the rest of his children standing near the house, all in tears, and he smiles.

“I think…I think maybe we need a puppy. I mean, who better than us to teach this little guy to swim?”

Aiden lifts his head, eyes wide, and Will hands the puppy over to him.

“Now, you need to go to the pet store with Dad and pick out things for him and we gotta get him looked at by a vet. Ok? If something’s wrong, and he’s sick…we’ll do the best we can to help him.”

“Da…”

Will touches Aiden’s cheek. “I think it’s time,” he says, “And I think…I think he found us because he knew.”

Hannibal wraps his arm around Will’s waist, pulling him back, and he sighs as Aiden runs off to show the puppy to the others. They’re so happy, excited, and years of homeschooling have made them so sheltered here in their house but this is something he can give them from the outside world.

“You’re certain you can handle this, Mielasis?”

Will lets out a long breath as he nods. “Yeah, I am.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Shall we inform everyone before their visit this evening or make it a surprise?”

Will smiles as he sniffles. “I think a surprise would be fun.”

He nuzzles Will's neck. "I will take Aiden to the store, and we will be home by dinner."

"Ok."

"I love you, Will."

Will smiles at him. "I love you too."

He watches Hannibal get up and go over to Aiden, who holds Bubbles in his arms tightly as he looks at Will one more time. He mouths, 'I love you Da' and Will's chest aches.

'I love you too, baby'

Michael ends up going with Hannibal and Aiden, which isn't a surprise since the two of them are inseparable. Will gets up with some effort, and drags himself to the house while the children bring him down to the pool.

Family swims are not uncommon, and it's even less common for Will's kids to want to be near him when he's upset. All fifteen of them go into the pool, and racing games ensue despite Will always winning.

He gets out after an hour, though the kids stay in, and he grabs his phone while he sits on the edge.

It only takes one ring for him to get an answer.

"Graham, you'd better not be pregnant again, because I am NOT coming if that's the case. We can't both be pregnant at the same time."

Will smiles. “Bev, I told you I’m done.”

“Sure,” she says, laughing, “You know that when you start to get empty nest syndrome in a few years you’ll think otherwise.”

He laughs. “No way.”

“Uh huh.”

Will watches Sebastian and Beverly play ‘Prey’ with Emma and Ethan who very easily win, pushing them both under while they laugh.

“Nah, I think…I think I’m good.”

“Ok, so why are you calling me when I’m coming there in a few hours?”

Will sighs.

“I had…there was a problem earlier and I just…I wanted to talk to you.”

She’s quiet. “Will?”

“Aiden found a dog,” he says, “And he blew up at me and I…I think…I think I’m ready to… it’s time but I still…he’s there, and even… *she’s* there. Trying to make me think about them.”

Bev sighs.

“Oh Will…shit.”

“I’m sorry, I just…” he says, looking down as he tries not to cry.

“Da?”

He looks up, and sniffles. “I’m ok, kids, I just…oh.”

“Will?”

Will blinks.

“What day is it?”

“Um, Friday? What do you…”

Will stands up fast, clutching his belly, and his eyes widen.

“Will?”

“Bev…I…I have to go.”

“Wait, what’s…”

He ends the call, and goes back into the water coming closer to the kids.

“Da?” Dylan asks, “Are you ok?”

Will lets out a long breath as he smiles.

“I need you all to do something for me, ok?”

They all look at each other.

“Ok?”

“Can you touch my belly?”

It’s an odd request, and he knows it, but one by one they come closer touching his belly. The feeling is calming, comforting, and the minute he closes his eyes he knows.

“Da, are you having babies?”

Will smiles as tears fill his eyes.

“I think…I…I think I need to call your Dad.”

The kids all come closer, their eyes wide, and the anger he expects isn’t there. They’re happy.

“How many do you think it will be? A lot?” Aria asks.

“Nah, it’ll be too much if it’s a lot,” Sebastian says, “I think…”

Will laughs, and moves closer to them holding out his arms. “Come here.”

They all hug, a mess of arms and bodies, but it’s the best feeling he’s had all day. Will feels a flutter in his belly, so obvious, and wonders how he could’ve ignored it until now.

He pulls back, still grinning, and rushes to the pool’s edge to find his phone. He’s had four missed calls from Haninbal already, and that alone almost makes him want to cry again.

Hannibal answers on the first ring.

“Will? What’s happened? I could feel your emotional upheaval and…”

“Hey,” he says, trying not to cry, “I…I need you to come home now.”

“What’s wrong? You sound…”

“I just need you here, I can’t say it over the phone.”

“Will, you’re frightening me.”

He lets out another breath. “Don’t be. I promise, it’s…it’s a good thing. Just please get here soon.”

“We will, I promise.”

“Ok,” Will says, “I…I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Will ends the call, gets up, and turns to his children.

“Dad is coming home, and…I think…dinner tonight will be fun.”

They all laugh.

“Aunt Bev is gonna be so happy,” Sara says, “You and her are gonna be pregnant at the same time!”

Will grins. “Yeah, I’m not too sure about that but…we’ll see.”

He grabs a towel and heads down the hall, rubbing over his belly as he walks.

“We’ll need to put on an addition,” he says, “And you’ll have to deal with a lot of protective older brothers and sisters….but…I think…I think you’ll like it here. I know you will.”

Will goes to his bedroom, closes the door, and takes off his towel to wait naked on the bed.

He doesn’t have to wait long.

It’s about an hour to town, and yet Hannibal gets home in forty minutes. He runs into their bedroom, his eyes red, and frowns when he sees Will.

“Will?”

“Close the door.”

Hannibal walks up, taking off his coat, and sits on the edge of the bed. “You made it seem so urgent and yet…”

Will takes his hand and squeezes. “You know how lately you’ve felt so…overprotective? Like earlier when you were practically carrying me to the chair?”

“I…yes?”

“Do you remember way back when you…you just…knew?”

Hannibal blinks. “I’m not sure what you…” he pauses, his widening, and Will moves Hannibal’s hand to his belly, “Will.”

“It looks like we’ll have to put that addition on after all.”

He launches himself at Will, kissing him hard, and Will grasps his neck growling as Hannibal reaches for his belt.

“Hannibal…”

“I will lock the door.”

“Please.”

Hannibal runs to the door, locks it, and practically rips off his pants before he's on Will again. Will tries to be quiet, biting his lip as Hannibal bites marks all over his neck, and he shudders with every touch.

"Hannibal…"

"Mine," he growls, "My…my Will…my…mine."

"Yesss."

He turns Will onto his side, licking at his waiting hole, and Will covers his mouth to keep from screaming. Every touch is like fire, and yet he doesn't want to stop the burn. Hannibal thrusts into him slowly, achingly taking his time, and when he strokes Will it's the same.

"Oh god, just…just fuck me. I…I need it."

"Will…"

"Please."

Hannibal moves faster, shoving their mouths together, and it doesn't take long for Will after that. He comes with a whimper, reveling in Hannibal's humming that follows, and when Hannibal's orgasm hits he has tears in his eyes when he bites into the mating mark that's never gone away.

He nuzzles after, licking the wound, and Will sighs.

"I guess…we're getting more than just a football team."

Hannibal smiles. “Perhaps…two?”

“Don’t push your luck,” Will mumbles, “We’ve already got one, and are so close it’s…god it really is possible isn’t it?”

“Yes,” he whispers, putting his hands over Will’s belly as the fluttering makes them both smile.

“They’re happy to feel you.”

“I’m happy to feel them.”

He keeps his hands there, the fluttering nonstop, and Will just sighs.

“What will your father say?”

Will smiles. “Oh god?”

Hannibal laughs. “Beverly will be displeased, I’m sure. The number of times she has threatened me if I got you pregnant with her are many.”

Will leans back against him. “She’ll get over it.”

Hannibal kisses his cheek. “Yes, she will.”

They lay there in silence, basking in the afterglow, and the sound of barking makes Will smile as he rubs his belly.

“Who knows,” he says, “Maybe her kids and my kids will get mated. Maybe…this is fate stepping in to be sure a few more of my kids help continue our species.”

Hannibal smiles against his neck.

“Perhaps.”

“Or…we’re just *really really* compatible.”

Hannibal hums, and Will does the same.

“That may be the most likely.”

Will laughs and turns to smile at him.

“You wanna go for a swim before everyone gets here?”

Hannibal’s eyes redden. “In the pool?”

Will shakes his head, and he shifts, licking his lips. “No.”

Hannibal touches his cheek.

“I’d be delighted.”

“Do you think you can find me if I get a head start?”

Hannibal kisses him softly.

“I could find you anywhere.”

Will feels tears fill his eyes.

“I know.”

He takes off running, overwhelmed but also excited, and the kids are nowhere to be found but he’s sure they’ve got headphones on somewhere. The cold hits him the minute he goes under, feeling like home, and he’s barely past the grass when Hannibal grabs him from behind.

Found you.

Will can’t feel the tears he knows are there, but he turns kissing him as they swim together.

I knew you would. You always do.

Hannibal found him the first time, so long ago now it feels like another life, and he knows without a doubt that he’d find him again and again.

This is where he’s meant to be.

Home.

He’s home.

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